MIRA NAIR
SOONI TARAPOREVALA

SALAAM BOMBAY!

The incredible story behind the making of the award-winning film about the street-children of Bombay. Plus the original, unabridged screenplay.

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Mira Nair in search of 'Buddha'

BOMBAY, April 19 (UNI)– Mira Nair of *Salaam Bombay* and *Mississipi Masala* fame is in search for an actor who can play his role of Buddha, effusing the great teacher's spirituality, for the film titled *Buddha* which is to be directed by her.

The idea for the multi-million dollar film was conceived in 1988 by Mr Ronnie Colsen, chairman of Waco Productions Ltd, and producer of the film. Indian industrialist B K Modi is also associated with the film for which shooting locations will be selected, starting today, according to Mira Nair who is in the city.

Buddha's teachings have influenced the lives and cultures of almost a third of the world. This epic production about the great philosopher from ancient India will be neither a documentary nor a religious film, asserts Ms Nair.

It will have reality and will be shorn of religious trappings, she says. It will only give a dramatic account of Siddhartha's life as a man, who gave up everything, in his search for enlightenment.

The screenplay for the film has been written by Robert Bolt. Backed by a team of more than 15 researchers, it has taken the writer of Oscar winners such as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Dr Zhivago* and *A Man For All Seasons* over two years to complete the script of *Buddha*.

The film will be made in English and later dubbed in other languages, including Sanskritised Hindi.

Shooting for the film will begin soon following selection and international cast and completion of the search for a relatively unknown actor for the title role. Arrangements for worldwide distribution are now being finalised.

SALAAM BOMBAY!

MIRA NAIR
&
SOONI TARAPOREVALA

PENGUIN BOOKS

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Note on the Film

Salaam Bombay ! Mira Nair's film about the street-children of Bombay had its Indian première at the Archana theatre, New Delhi, on 11 January 1989 and its world première at Cannes on 19 May 1988 at The Old Palais. The film was shot entirely on location, using children from the streets of Bombay to play key-roles. The film won the following awards in 1988-89:

Camera D'Or—Golden Camera Award, the 41st Cannes Film Festival 1988, for Best First Feature film to Mira Nair; Prix du Public—Quinzaine des Realisateurs—voted Most Popular Film by the public of Cannes; National Award, Best Child Actor, India, 1989; National Award, Best Hindi Film, India, 1989; Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, Oscar Nomination for Best Foreign Film, United States, 1988; Jury Prize—Montreal World Film Festival, 1988; Air Canada Public Prize—Montreal World Film Festival, 1988—voted Most Popular Film of the Festival by the public; Special Ecumenical Jury Prize, Montreal World Film Festival, 1988; Lillian Gish Award for Best Feature Film at Women's Film Festival, Los Angeles, 1988 to Sooni Taraporevala; Samuelson Award, Birmingham International Film Festival, 1988, United Kingdom; Best Feature Film, Tyneside International Film Festival, 1988, United Kingdom; Prix Femina Belge du Cinema, Brussels, 1988; New Generation Award to Mira Nair, Los Angeles Film Critics Association, 1988; Prix du Public, 6th Festival de Cinema, MJC Annonay, 1989; Transition Award, Psychotherapy Film Society, Los Angeles, 1989; Golden Globe Nomination for Best Foreign Film, 1988, Hollywood Foreign Press Association; voted Best Film by the Festival audience, Sydney Film Festival, 1989; Academie des Arts et des Techniques du Cinema Cesar Nomination Meilleur Film Estranger.

Foreword

This is an account of private madness. It is straight from the heart, a raw chronicle of letters to close friends and co-workers, notes to myself, personal meditations: the obsessive journey that finally culminated in the film *Salaam Bombay* !

It is not a manual on how to make a film. It does not describe each step of the way, and is frequently elliptical. This is because my main goal was obviously the film itself. I have not backtracked and recreated episodes to fill in the cracks in the section on the making of the film. This, because, I had no idea at the beginning that a book could emerge out of the process.

Salaam Bombay ! is not a fairy-tale. The reality of the children who are denied a childhood but who survive on the streets with resilience, humour, flamboyance and dign·ty is a problem that exists not only in India. It is a problem in our own backyards, everywhere. I believe the story could easily be *Salaam Bronx, Salaam Brixton, Salaam Brazil.*

In the text, I have not changed any names at all. However, there are many people who have offered me faith and advice who may not appear in the this text. They remain with me, and I offer them my heartfelt *salaams*.

In particular, I would like to thank Gloria Bremer and Hemant Patel for their spirited assistance in the execution of this book, and my dear friend Khalid Tyabji for his incisive reading of the text.

New Delhi
12 June 1989

Mira Nair

The Making of
SALAM BOMBAY

The Making of *Salaam Bombay!*

Bombay 1983. The taxi stopped at a red light at the Bandra flyover. Within moments I was surrounded by street-children of all ages performing, begging, blowing soap-bubbles, dancing, washing windows with a dirty rag—anything for a few paise. In the centre of the intersection I could see a fifteen-year-old boy, his torso rising from maimed legs that rested on a wooden platform on wheels pushing himself by his hands from car to car, his skinny fingers stretching into each car window, begging. The light changed to green. I was terrified of what might happen to him now, surrounded as he was by trucks, cars, scooters, rick-shaws. The boy caught hold of the back of a scooter, carried himself along at top speed until he reached the edge of the road, and there, propelled by sheer momentum, pirouetted flamboy-antly, his hands raised skywards, saluting the deafening ap-plause of an imaginary audience.

This was the first image that inspired the making of Salaam Bombay! *a story of the lives of children living on the streets of Bombay, a story that celebrates their spirit of survival in a world that denies them the luxury of childhood.*

'DERABAD / JANUARY 1986 / JOURNAL

NO GUTS NO GLORY. That's what Sooni said to me after the world première of *India Cabaret** to a packed, electrified audi-ence. The film was clearly working. We were going on to Orissa to do our first collaboration: a script on my childhood but Sooni said, after the response to *Cabaret* why not develop your earlier idea on the Bombay kids instead? I said, it's too huge, too

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e third film by Mira Nair—a documentary on strippers in a Bombay club.

ambitious. Sooni retorted in her fearless, nonchalant style: NO GUTS NO GLORY. These words were to keep us going through out the tumultuous two years that were to follow.

HYDERABAD / 19 JANUARY 1986 / LETTER TO MITCH EPSTEIN

Dear Mitch:

India Cabaret has caused a pretty major sensation here—much more than you and I even thought it could or would—and I am bombarded, literally, with comments, reporters, criticisms praise, curiosity, and as always, the desire for others to label me one thing or another. What is amazing about the dimension of the reaction to *Cabaret* is that *everybody* has an opinion on it; it has clearly been the topic of debate over many days and nights now. In fact, I'm still trying to understand the reaction deeply.

The inauguration was a big affair, replete with speeches, garlands, screeching mikes. What was interesting about it was that it was attended by all sorts of factions—the mainstream Bombay film industry, the so-called 'art cinema' people of Bombay and the staunch feminist organizations. Twenty-five of these groups were invited to hold workshops at the festival, and apparently had strongly criticized Parminder Vir for choosing *Cabaret* to open the festival, even before anyone had seen it here. All these people were present, plus a massive, largely male, public, at least a few hundred of whom had to be turned away at the door. So the place was packed to the gills, representing all kinds of groups in India that one would normally never have under one roof, all seeing one movie: *Cabaret!* I was utterly traumatized, but could feel the audience with the film throughout, listening and seeing everything. Nobody left. The film has a kind of immediacy here, an obvious weight, which heightens every image. People laughed at totally different things, and a hush fell over the crowd with the brief dance sequences. I tell you, in India, even the mere glimpse of skin acquires a sick connotation. In fact, the best way to describe to you my distressed state of mind is this image: as I sat alone viewing the film with the crowd, I actually pictured and heard the Chairperson of National Film Development Corpor

tion (NFDC) get up during Rekha's dance and scream—'That's enough—shut this thing off!' That's how nervous I was. Of course, no such thing happened. Instead, they laughed at Rekha's mythological joke with laughter I had never before heard in my life—raucous, full, almost violent in its intensity.

Amidst all these reactions—and this includes the positive ones (that the film is totally absorbing, stunning to look at, beautifully constructed and provocative) I have learnt about and accepted certain points which I know would have made the film much more effective. First, the film could have been slightly more disturbing than it is; it could have highlighted more the economics of the situation, made the owner more the pimp he really was, and it could have visually seen the customers more from the dancers' point of view. That would have achieved my purpose in an undidactic and visual way, integral to the style of the film as it already is, and done away with this needless misunderstanding that the film exploits the exploited.

It is true that after you make a piece of work you have to listen to the reactions to it, absorb what you think useful, and then wash everything off and start again. I'm almost at that stage now, with all the discussion generated by the film, but I find myself listening to all the responses. You'll be glad to know that I'm not taking it all too seriously. The feminist reaction is much too rigid, and completely unable to deal with the surprise, ironies and contradictions of life. Essentially it is one coming from a middle-class morality, one that is deeply puritanical and unable to deal with sexuality of any kind.

All in all, opening the film in Hyderabad gave me an amazing opportunity to have my work be seen in India—beyond my doing anything to mobilize the attention—and I am happy it caused so much controversy and debate. It would be boring to make a film that pleased everybody. It has been good to surprise people like this, to make them sit up, to not give them the point of view that they expect to see. This prevents people from liking the work simply because they *should* like it, simply because it takes a noble approach to the problem of exploited women. I have been reading Bunuel's script of *Los Olvidados* and I couldn't agree more with what Andre Bazin has to say about the depiction of the children

in the film:

'The greatness of this film can be grasped immediately when one has sensed that it never refers to moral categories. These children are beautiful not because they do good or evil, but because they are children even in crime and even in death. The prime originality in *Los Olvidados* lies in daring to distort the myth. It is all very well to build model farms where justice, work and fraternity reign, but so long as the same society of injustice and pain remains outside, the evil—namely the objective cruelty of the world—remains outside.'

Although I do understand that in India—where injustice is so blatantly perpetrated, where disparities abound and the exploitative hierarchy prevails—it is difficult to reveal that the exploited are also human and also contain in them the seeds of evil and cruelty as the upper-class do—because the scales of society are so clearly tipped against them—yet in my own heart I feel it difficult to shy away from this complexity of life and give in to the simplistic categories of good and evil. Maybe all this sounds terribly obvious to you, as it perhaps would to me if I were sitting in New York, but this is how perspectives can change—or at least be unsettled—when in a different context. So much for my own dilemmas!

BOMBAY / 2 FEBRUARY 1986 / LETTER TO MITCH EPSTEIN

Dear Mitch,

Sooni and I have finally plunged into the research of the street-kids' film—another *Cabaret*, except on a grander scale. We are visiting remand homes, seeing analysts who work with delinquent children, going to a jail tomorrow where young drug-addicts are supposedly rehabilitated. It's a huge, bewildering and completely gripping universe—so rich with possibilities for a film, so harrowing to witness. Yesterday we met a nine-year-old boy who does not speak. He was regarded as deaf and dumb, until the doctors declared him to be physiologically totally normal. Sooni's friend—G., a psychoanalyst—has been working with him for over three months now—and he has slowly begun to make sounds again. Apparently his mother was a prostitute, and

he had so much rage and confusion inside him that he chose silence as his weapon against the world. G. said that he was disturbed by something she might say to him, he would just spin around the room screaming.

Our eyes and hearts are wide open, and we're simply observing and trying to grasp the enormity of the dimensions. It could be a great film in so many ways—not sentimental, but about the survival of the fittest, about children who have never known a childhood, of situations in which children find themselves trapped and have no option but to do something. I am still inarticulate about so much of what we are seeing, Mitchu, of so much that we hear about and will see. There is so much to be done in the way of research, that scripting will only follow later, once we have a lot of material. And the world of children on the streets here is idiosyncratic and varied, that is where the true richness of the film lies. If we simply construct it from our own ideas and not from the world as it really is for them, we would certainly resort to cliches and predictability—when in fact this subject is exactly opposite to that. Necessity truly is the mother of invention for these children—and we must see that firsthand.

BOMBAY / 8 FEBRUARY 1986 / LETTER TO MITCH EPSTEIN

Dear Mitch,

We are finally immersed in a set routine with our research and it is satisfying, hard, harrowing but ultimately effective and rewarding. We have three points of pretty rare access: first, through Pradeep Shinde, the reporter who initially introduced me to the Meghraj,* we have been allowed to tour the Arthur Road Jail, which is an old, large jail for hardcore criminals. It also has a special section for adolescent boys from twelve to eighteen, plus a small women's section. Not only were we subjected to the harrowing experience of an official tour of the jail—where we saw hundreds of boys lined up with close-cropped hair, eyes downcast, body in a total position of servility, with their number-tags in front of them, but we also had the opportunity of interviewing six to seven of them individually in a room with a tape

* The club where *India Cabaret* was filmed.

recorder—a room which could well be used for the initial stages of torture that they are all subject to in order that they confess to their crimes. In this way, we heard a number of stories which might have otherwise taken us days to get—and I frankly don't know where to begin telling you all the stories. It's a life that exists on recycling the waste of India—such an irony—they have largely been brought here for small-time thefts of waterpipes, neontubes from railway stations, iron and steel scrap from factories, things they can sell for around twenty rupees a kilo or a little more at best. Some of them were simply caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, one was caught pissing on the street, but they all must serve a few months at least before a court hearing. Such amazing faces! There was an eleven-year-old boy with a round face, punctuated with little scars on the cheeks and forehead, and a haircut so close to his scalp that he looked bald. He had long lashes and always looked down, his hands always in a *namaste* position, as if silently asking us to plead for his release. We felt that he would cry any minute. Sooni asked him if everybody's hair was cut like this, to look bald (she used a funny Bombay colloquialism, *tuklu*) and suddenly his face broke into a most illuminating, mischievous smile that was heart-rending. Of course, we are complete suckers for these kids.

The second point of access is Dr. Gilada—whom I also met doing *Cabaret* research—a doctor who serves the Falkland Road area by running a free clinic for VD etc for the local prostitutes. Through him we have access to an amazing world on a lane off Kamathipura—The Nepalese Women's Association—a whole street of whores from Nepal, including a number of minor prostitutes, whom we're interested in spending some time with. Since we're associated with The Good Guy—the doctor—people have allowed us into the brothels and talked to us. The day we arrived a twenty-five-year-old Nepalese girl had died of withdrawal from brown sugar overdose. There's a real brown sugar epidemic now in Bombay. It was an emotional moment, when all the girls were numb with shock, and yet there was a feeling that this was just one of the number gone, that others would fill the gap in a matter of a day.

Visually the street was incredibly particular, lively, filled with

the strangest juxtapositions. The brothels themselves were tiny, little rooms, painted the inimitable peacock green-blue, lined with bright handpainted colour photographs of the girls (each one more startling than the next, plus always a picture of Indira Gandhi); the plastic cabinets which the girls sit on are a pyschedelic magenta and black. Outside, life is teeming. Women of all shapes and sizes are cooking *chapattis* on the ground, the white flour in stark contrast to the filth of their surroundings. There are mixed Nepali-Indian children everywhere, a lot of screaming and shouting. At least five vendors pass by, selling brightly-coloured barrettes and buckets and hairpins. In the far corner, a *La Strada*-type character sits smoking, guarding his turquoise-painted ferris wheel on which two young prostitutes—barely sixteen—whirl about in glee. On the ground, two young boys are playing horsey; the rubber tubing of a cycle tyre serves as the reins, their horse being a nine-year-old deformed boy, his legs like thin sticks, but he's happy, it seems, to be a part of the group. We saw so much—this is only a very simple beginning. We've been told not to return immediately because of the death of the girl, and will resume going there only next week.

The third area we've been exploring is near Sooni's place opposite Grant Road station. She met an old friend who runs a sandwich-shop. He called all the street-kids together and introduced us; they haltingly told us their stories. Our favourite is a boy called Chaipau. Anyway, we've now met and spend an average of three days a week hanging about with them; they're a gang of five movie-crazy kids, all of whom have run away from their villages and families to find a life for themselves in Bombay. They're scrap-collectors, scavengers, waiters at weddings, drug-peddlers, also bet-carriers for gamblers. Today we bought them a football and spent the day at Chowpatty. We thought they'd play football but instead they tore their clothes off their backs and plunged into the filthy ocean. It was quite an image: these bodies flinging about in water littered with marigolds, coconut husks, fruits, straw, cloth. It all takes a lot of time and sometimes I despair; but I tell you I feel very liberated when I think that what I am seeing is not my material per se, that is, I am not tied to it faithfully as I would be in the case of a documentary. Here it's

exciting to mould what we see into a script—but of course, nothing is easy, and I often wonder whether hanging about in this world for a few weeks is enough to translate it onto screen.

Tomorrow we return to Munori for three days, when we hope to consolidate all the material into written form so that we won't forget any details for the script.

NEW YORK / 27 SEPTEMBER 1986 / LETTER TO NAINA LAL, A FRIEND

Dear Naina,

Sooni came to New York in July, and we converted all the material that we had amalgamated in your flat in Bombay into a 110-page screenplay tentatively titled *Chull Bumbai Chull*. It has gone through many permutations since we were walking the Bombay streets, but in essence it does remain the stories of survival of street-kids in Bombay. It has characters, *musti*, humour, and eventually tragedy—but I think we still have a long way to go before it is tight and complete. The whole process of writing has been a first for both of us—and has been unabashedly exciting, hard, tedious and slow. But we believe in it—and we go on. We've only just begun to hand out the script for potential funds, and it looks like the film may become a reality soon. At any rate, I intend to come to India again in January—for the film festival in Delhi—and then to Bombay at the end of the month for a few weeks of pre-production work. Hope you will be in the country then. Would love your help in finding me a PG situation somewhere in downtown Bombay.

10 DECEMBER 1986 / LETTER TO SOONI TARAPOREVALA

Dearest Sooniman,

Saala, the fucking Corporation for Public Broadcasting. I haven't had the heart to call and ask them The Reasons For Rejecting *Chull Bumbai Chull*. Although I was completely expecting it, the way you and Mitch went on about vibes, there was a little flutter in my heart as I saw the envelope lying there. Today, as we did a list of our debts for the house, and as I thought

of the expenses yet to come towards even the fund-raising of the film, I began to get a little nervous.

A ROUGH SCHEDULE

- 15 Jan—25 Jan: Delhi: Festival, ministries, some casting around.
- 25 Jan—1 Feb: Bombay: Getting settled, Shetty etc, checking out people for crew, cast, walking around locations.
- 1 Feb—15 Feb: Script rewrite.
- 15 Feb—21 Feb: Bombay again; more work on the production end.
- 21 Feb—27 Feb: Goa?
- 1 March—10 March: More script work.

And now the script. As I said on the phone, my ideas are only the rawest of the raw. Baba's character is still a problem. If he could be more like we imagined him in the earlier Munori sessions: more complex, pathetic, ashamed of a past, wanting to increase his status, something—the whole film would have more resonance—because Baba is a vital character in the world of the other main characters we have. My intention was to simply keep only that which was necessary for us to tell a certain story—and only then graft onto it. The more I think of it, the more I miss Baba's complexity. He has to become pathetic in the end, and the only way we can do that is by showing the larger forces of society bearing down on him as well—in some fashion. Somehow I've been thinking of him crying in Rekha's arms again.

For the moment, I'll just be sending the second draft around for fund-raising possibilities. Let me know what you think as soon as you think it!

BOMBAY / 23 JANUARY 1987 / LETTER TO MITCH EPSTEIN

Dear Mitch,

Delhi was, as usual, intense. The festival is as always—the same faces more or less, the same mild chaos, the same bad projection, and unfortunately, the same unbelievably low quality of so-called serious Indian films. One can be devoured here, it is such a small world with so little that is challenging happening. In this

context it was especially helpful and encouraging to spend time with Farrukh Dhondy (Commissioning Editor, Channel 4) discussing the script. We could not have been more fortunate in working with him—he is incisive, articulate and honest and there is absolutely no bullshit. I would say that he is totally committed to the project but, like us, wants to make it as good as possible. So Sooni and I are bashing on regardless.

The other really exciting thing that happened is that I might have found the best actor for Chillum. His name is Raghubir Yadav and he's playing the lead role in an Indian film called *Massey Sahib* where he plays a type-*babu*, an Indian clerk, in a small office of the British Raj and dreams of being English and pukka. He's amazing. In reality, he ran away from home when he was thirteen, joined a wandering theatre company for six years, finally joining the repertory of the National School of Drama. When I asked him about himself, he said he had basically been trained in feeding buffaloes! His is a wonderful, impish, sympathetic and funny face—flapping ears and a quick smile—and although he is in his thirties is built so small that he could definitely play an older kid. Also his spirit is completely of the street, and since he's worked with Barry John for years (Barry has enthusiastically agreed to coordinate and do the children's workshops in June and July) I think he could be pivotal in the whole workshop process, especially in training the children and striking up a rapport with them. So let's see.

BOMBAY / 8 FEBRUARY 1987 / LETTER TO MITCH EPSTEIN

Dear Mitch,

I have been alternating between anxiety and excitement over the past few weeks as the film very slowly becomes a reality. Basically Sooni and I have spent a lot of time discussing the dramatic structure of the film, have decided on a specific outline, and she now writes the scenes one after the other. I transcribe them on Arvind's computer—a great help—edit them further, and finally discuss them with Sooni each night. The process is going well, although I know we have to be open to a whole lot of change once the workshop begins.

I've spent a lot of time with Anil, and think he will be perfect as Executive Producer on the project. He is extremely organized, is on such good terms with everyone, and really is a calm spirit to be around. He definitely diffuses my nervous anxiety; I always arrive at his place thinking the film is this great big blob of work that I don't even remotely know how to tackle, and as soon as our meeting progresses, things become more tangible and realizable and I leave feeling the whole thing will be an amazingly exciting endeavour.

My old friend and director, Barry John, is extremely enthusiastic about the idea of working on the film and, as things now stand, will arrive in Bombay at the beginning of June to start recruiting the twenty-five children we need for the workshop. We need fifteen kid actors—many of them small roles, no doubt—so this will be a vital process for casting. If Raghubir Yadav agrees to play Chillum, I have an instinctive feeling that he would be of great value in the workshop process, even on the level of a professional actor giving energy and guidance to non-actors. I am presently considering Naseeruddin Shah for the role of Baba, and believe it or not, one of India's leading 'stars'—Rekha—for the role of her namesake in the film. She definitely looks the part—on condition that she does not wear all that filmi makeup, of course, and she is also a great actress. Their roles are becoming more and more important, not only in screen-time, but more so in their drama—(in the new draft) and are great roles for any actor.

BOMBAY / 13 FEBRUARY 1987 / JOURNAL

Michael Nozik (Executive Producer, US) calls from New York. Tells me he's received positive reactions to the script from Circle Films, Skouras Pictures but no money commitment since the film's in Hindi with a first-time director. Chris Menges (Cinematographer of *The Killing Fields*) will call in early March about whether or not he's interested in shooting it. Handmade Films is still a possibility for $1,00,000 or some. Otto Grokenburger will try and compile a list of German investors who might help. Michael will try and get a letter of commitment from an American distribution company anyway.

BOMBAY / 15 FEBRUARY 1987 / LETTER TO MITCH EPSTEIN

Dear Mitch,

I am in a funk; yesterday night we printed out the third draft and Sooni's friend Rashida read it immediately. We were elated at the prospect of making such headway so soon—but Rashida's reaction to it was that this draft seriously undercut the spirit of the last one; it seemed to her to be adulterated, unnecessarily sweetened. She felt the edge had been taken away, even if the characters were seemingly more integrated. Granted, her reactions are her own, but a lot of her reasons made sense. There is really no point scrambling for solutions immediately—Sooni and I lack distance now, and we should take a little break from the machinations of the world we have created. So at this immediate moment, I am feeling slightly despondent and confused—even though I rationally know that this is a part of the whole process. My feeling is that our goal should be simply to find the essence of the film; the form it takes will constantly be worked on until the shooting. The workshop itself will change things greatly. But for now it is the essence that may still be eluding us: is it Chaipau's movie, or is it a movie about adults and children, or is it a movie about the pull of the big city? Or is it all of this and is all this too much for one movie? We're back to the same questions, and the ultimate one: do we still need a PLOT or is our episodic, clearly documentary quality going to be compelling enough for people to keep watching?

Being in India is having its own inexorable influence on this draft; we have made Rekha too much The Good Mother and less the resilient, tough woman of *Cabaret*—it is almost as if we tried to make her more palatable to an Indian audience. I think we will finally have a blend of both the personas we have created—but I do know in my heart that if the film were made from the second draft alone it would be grim and cruel and would elicit the same kind of reaction that *Cabaret* received. That is not bad in itself, but there are some lessons I learned from the controversy surrounding *Cabaret*

and I would like to try things in this film a little differently. Not that we have to please everybody—just that we have to make things clear enough so that people don't get the exact opposite of what we're trying to reveal. It is hard and confusing—and perhaps I should exercise the principles of yoga now and simply Let Go And Things Will Come To Us.

It was exciting to finally meet Naseeruddin Shah after admiring so much of his work. He seemed very interested in the project—one of the things he said rightaway when I described the process of how I intend to cast the kids etc was that he would want to be involved in the workshop. Sweet words to hear—because that is what I would like to have him do. Tomorrow we give him the script—possibly both drafts—and talk to him straight about the changes.

BOMBAY / 5 MARCH 1987 / LETTER TO MITCH EPSTEIN

Dear Mitch,

Now as I make preparations to leave Bombay for Delhi, I reflect on my time here and hope that everything is falling into place as it should. The uncertainties—of money, quality, casting—have succeeded in making me quite a worrier. We have had a few meetings with Naseeruddin Shah, who upon reading the second draft said he didn't really like the character of Baba and that he must at least have some compassion for the chap if he is to play him. Fair enough. We've handed him the fourth draft which is a far more compassionate portrayal and he will let us know his decision in two days. When something/somebody becomes hard to get I want it more; it's a typical thing with me. I only hope I can reassure him on the fact that we too want Baba to be as complex and vulnerable as possible, and we're open to making that happen with his help. He is really a remarkable actor—and a very intelligent and thoughtful human being. It would be a pleasure working with him.

However, in the quest for Rekha, I went to see a Marathi play—*Purush*—and had to pick up tickets from an actor backstage. This man—he introduced himself as Nana Patekar—was already in costume, with hair coming out of his ears and in squeaky *kohlapuris*, beautifully built (just like a local *dada)* and

this deep, deep voice. I missed a beat, thinking to myself—God, this guy would be a perfect Baba. He would just *be* Baba.

Anil and I made an application to NFDC for ten lakhs just in case the money doesn't come through elsewhere. I just spoke to Jane Balfour (Associate Producer) who said that German TV is not interested in supporting the film. I do hope something works out—because I have to show Channel 4 where the remaining fifty per cent of the budget is coming from before they can give me the first instalment. Delhi—with all the tasks of working with the ministries for permissions etc., discussing the script with Barry John and Raghubir Yadav—will again be pretty intense.

We've had the rare and wonderful privilege of seeing a group of Tarkovsky films here in the past few days—the ones I told you to see—*Ivan's Childhood* and *Andrei Rubleyev*. Both were jewels in themselves—primarily visual experiences of a transcendent nature. You MUST see them both before we begin to shoot—the camera-work is to be seen to be believed. I think so much in images for our film—I would like it to be more visual than anything—a lot of movement, a lot of wide-angle, a lot of choreographed freedom.

LONDON EN ROUTE TO NEW YORK / END OF MARCH 1987 / AIRPLANE JOURNAL

I saw Channel 4—Peter Flood and Farrukh Dhondy—with a handwritten budget I drew up on Jane's couch. About $6,00,000. Flood took one look at it and flung it back at me. I didn't know what was happening. He said it was totally under-budgetted, unrealistic, I should give myself a break and pay myself and make sure the film happens well. He said around $8,00,000 would be more acceptable. It's clear they can't give me the total budget anyway—it's not going to be a British film—so I have to go out and raise fifty to fifty-one per cent for them to give me the rest. Oh well. So much for the dream—now Full Speed Ahead. I'm going to do it.

NEW YORK / APRIL 1987 / JOURNAL

Went to my first skating party at the Wollman Rink in Central Park, thanks to an invite by Carey and Pepe. Met Steve Lavine of

The Rockefeller Foundation while whizzing around on iceskates for the first time in my life. He said he felt guilty for never supporting my work. I told him he still had a chance, but that I thought the new film might be too profane for The Rockefeller. Too many motherfuckers in the script. He said, Try me. I will.

NEW YORK / 17 APRIL 1987 / JOURNAL

Michael Nozik introduced me to his girlfriend, Cherie Rodgers, an entertainment attorney at Frankfurt Garbus Klein and Selz, who loved the script and said she wanted to do anything she possibly could to get this film made. I just laughed. She said, you know you really shouldn't laugh—I'm serious. She's beautiful too, real down-home and speaks with this unique un-New York drawl. I liked her immediately.

NEW YORK / 22 APRIL 1987 / LETTER TO SOONI TARAPOREVALA

Dearest Sooniman,

I have finally managed to hold the hecticity of my life and head at bay and sit down and write to you. The avalanche has begun. I've been learning the ropes of western-style feature budgets—a thirty-page detailed format that had to be filled for Channel 4, and it was scary, because once you fill each category, by hook or by crook, it is impossible to budget for a film under a million dollars! So it was, and continues to be a learning experience, not entirely without tension. Ever since C4's own strategy backfired about giving me the full $6,00,000, I've been in deep trouble. Maybe I should consider approaching the NFDC. News from Handmade still looks good—the script has gone on to the head of Creative Development after being highly recommended by the head of the American department and the Marketing Manager (who's also married to the head of Creative Dev.). But we won't hear for another two to three weeks on that. I'm also waiting to hear for small grants from Rockefeller (I have some vibes). So the pressure is on—I'm trying my best. At least one thing seems to be certain—they'll release some of the money this summer even if the remaining funding isn't in place—so it's full speed ahead

for the shoot. For all our sakes, however, I do hope some other money works out so that we can ensure a high quality of post-production and some lessening of anxiety.

Next year, this time, *Chull Paris Chull.*

Here are FD's comments on the script—delayed but what the hell.

Verbatim—from the bearded bard's mouth.

- Pg. 13-16: By this point he expects a hint of a plot. Thinks it would assist the rhythm of the film—wants us to be conscious of sacrificing the sociology to telling us that (a hint of a) story is about to follow. (I think I argued that a hint of a story is there in it already, then he said if the film was shot in too documentary a style the hint would disappear, so it depends on the way the film is shot and edited—whether it would heighten the story or the sociology of the film).
- We know people more by their relationships—not their pronouncements. Nothing in excess. Don't give in to Cheap Writer's Temptation.
- Pg. 37: The scribe should have a stronger action at the end of this scene—could crumple up the letter and throw it away. (Aside: I like that, Sooni—and have incorporated it already into the script—think it works well).

Also, Mini—(Dinaz Stafford, Second Assistant Director) dropped by for lunch with lots of hilarious and amazing stories of her life with the Adivasis. Quite a woman. She can't believe the film is actually happening and is quite excited about the whole thing. I tried to convince her to join us in the workshop and throughout the film—she had some very insightful comments about what kind of things to expect from the kids—she seemed very keen to, but needs some time to think about all her Cambridge stuff—whether she can delay joining there by a month.

Until May, *khuda haafiz* and all my love to you, the family, Rooky and Angeline.

NEW YORK / 15 APRIL 1987 / JOURNAL

I go to Michael Nozik's to pick up the budget he's kindly done for me: A Realistic Budget of a 35 mm film shot in India, post-

produced in America, with a five-member technical crew from America, the rest being Indian. He hands it to me saying he's cut corners absolutely everywhere: The Grand Total = $9,60,000. I am completely shocked. The most I've ever raised in my short life is $1,30,000 for *Cabaret*—how am I ever going to get this much for this one? Tears sting my eyes, but I'm not going to cry. I tell myself, Michael may be right but this one is going to be done guerrilla-style, an honest to goodness independent film, and I'm going to get it done on whatever I get in my hands. I walk down Broadway very depressed. And I'm going to have to start planning as if allthemoneyisinthebank.

NEW YORK / 1 MAY 1987 / LETTER TO BARRY JOHN, DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP

My dear Barry,

A long overdue note, I know, but things have been very hectic at this end. We've run into all sorts of budgetary hassles, and in spite of a budget cut, the schedule of the film is proceeding as planned.

This is simply to confirm that the workshop will be held in Bombay, as discussed, from between 10 June to 15 June for a six week period. I will arrive directly in Bombay by about 22 May and start the recruiting process for the children at that time. I would like it if you and Raghubir Yadav could come from Delhi latest by 4 June so that you could also play a role in this process.

So Barry—here we go to the Great Leap Forward—I'm thrilled that such an old dream is finally beginning to take shape—and even though I go up and down with all these other pressures, all we have to do is our best and we'll make something good.

NEW YORK / 1 MAY 1987 / LETTER TO ANIL TEJANI, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

My dear Anil,

The dust has settled for the moment and I can finally write to you.

1. We are still struggling to raise the matching sum needed from Handmade Films, French television, German TV and a hotshot Hollywood lawyer who has a client with blocked

monies in India and is interested in investing in a film. I am confident that I will be able to raise this sum by July, so please take it that pre-production and shooting will proceed as planned.

2. Please rent whatever hall you think appropriate from 15 June on for six weeks for the workshop. I would like it to be as unpretentious as possible—not fancy or upper-class so that the kids don't feel self-conscious.

3. Advertising in *Screen* for Solasaal is a good idea. Plan this any time after 25 May. Until I come, I would like it if you could do one very important thing: talk to various people (e.g.,my friend, Anand Patwardhan and his friend, a social worker, Anna Kurian) and find out local infrastructures where you could go and look at a number of street/slum-kids. Find such places, and if you think they are appropriate, enter them with their local leaders and talk to the kids about the workshop—just prepare them for the next step—when Barry and I come. Also, in this process, if you find a couple of people who are resourceful and know the lay of the land, hire them as assistants in helping us find the right kids. This is vital preparation for the workshop and very necessary. Please let me know your plans regarding this when you call next.

4. You know, of course, that we have the government permissions. *Kya* coup *hai!*

5. I have been looking at the work of a camerawoman here, Sandi Sissel, whom I know from her years of shooting documentaries. She has worked over the years in India and recently did *Mother Teresa*. Since then she's moved west and done feature work in Hollywood. Her images are more from the gut than any others I've seen at the moment; she's been working with independent film-makers like me and, importantly, understands a LOW BUDGET. I've sent word around other places, but her combination of experience and manner would probably make her ideal for this project.

6. Please arrange for me to see as many art directors and their work as possible when I arrive. This is absolutely vital because the sooner I make this decision, the more time we can spend together talking about the look of the film.

7. I've heard the dialogues once through and think they're basically okay. Some I like more than others. All in all, Baba sounds much too rough, and there're too many swear words. But I think Hriday Lani (Hindi dialogue writer) has the hang of it and we could work it out.
8. The title of the company is Mirabai Films for lack of anything better. I still haven't had the nerve to answer the phone with it!

We should plan to screen-test the actresses after 28 June, to be on the safe side. I'll confirm these dates when I come, but perhaps you could call Rekha Karlekar (a possible choice) and let her know. Did you think of any other women who could play Rekha?

That's all I can think of for now. In general, I'm feeling pretty excited about the film. It's a little frustrating not to have too much time to do any conceptual work—I seem to be doing production work most of the time, but *kya karen,* this fund-raising is essential.

I'll be sitting eating *khakhra* with you sooner than you think!

NEW YORK / 1 MAY 1987 / NOTE TO NILITA VACHANI, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Dear Neelu,

See you in Bombay June One. Until then, *Chull Bumbai Chull!*
I cannot tell you how excited I am about all the wonderful, bright, committed and strong *women* we have working together in this film! BASH ON REGARDLESS.

NEW YORK / 15 MAY 1987 / JOURNAL

Steve Lavine calls and says he couldn't put the script down—it reads like literature. I think to myself, uh-oh, that's not a good sign for a movie.

But he loved it. He's going to talk to his boss, Alberta Arthurs, who is keen on starting a Program Related Investment scheme at Rockefeller for projects they can invest in commercially. Said I should get a spiel ready with a lawyer *et al* about the commerciality of the project and come in and talk to the board.

I call Cherie and tell her about Rockefeller. She immediately begins to prepare a pitch: how much *El Norte* made at the box-office, how much *Pixote* made, how the market has expanded for foreign films, what video can bring in, etc. Meanwhile we spread Mitch's photographs of Bombay streets all over the house and choose a bunch that we will plaster all over the Rockefeller boardroom.

NEW YORK / 14 MAY 1987 / JOURNAL

I meet Sandy Stern (Executive, Skouras Pictures) to discuss the possibility of them investing some money. Once again, the same words: love the script, but it's in Hindi with a first-time director. Ho Hum. If it was in English, maybe. My attitude is: never waste an opportunity. You love the script, you write me a letter saying so, you say you will seriously consider distributing it when the film is finished. Sandy agrees.

I come home and call Leon Falk at Cinecom to ask him to do the same. He is at Cannes but his sweet assistant Nancy agrees. I offer to dictate the letter. The campaign has begun.

NEW YORK / 19 MAY 1987 / JOURNAL

I meet anybody who means money for the film. Today it's Arthur Cantor, a wonderful theatre producer who's put some money into films, old world a la Pennebaker. I like him—he likes the idea, is once again thrown by the fact the film's is in Hindi ('Sure that's not a typo?' he asks) and says the best he can do is speak to his pal Sammy Goldwyn Jr. Arthur distributes Gardner's *Forest of Bliss* which I love—I take that as a good sign.

I leave for India on 22 May and have not raised a single cent. Tomorrow is the fateful meeting with the Rockefeller board. Cherie is upset she cannot be there since she has to leave the country. She has arranged for Michael Frankfurt (from her law firm) to meet me at the Rockefeller lobby. I am prepared: I have the box-office numbers for other esteemed foreign films, my plan of action, a ten-minute videoclip from *India Cabaret* to show them, thirty large colour photographs by Mitch to show them what this film will look like.

NEW YORK / 20 MAY 1987 / JOURNAL

I couldn't sleep for more than three hours last night—followed by a twelve-hour migraine that continued through The Meeting. In the office lobby I wandered into the news-stand, Indian-owned of course; my eye fell on a greeting card that screamed: NO GUTS NO GLORY—Good Luck In Your Next Venture. I bought it immediately—*Kya* omen *hai*!

Michael Frankfurt and I go upstairs; he is cool, understated, self-assured. I watch in tense silence as the suited-booted board watch the *Cabaret* clip of Rosy in her village having brought money for her sister's dowry but not being allowed to come to the marriage, followed by her writhing on the floor of the cabaret. The trustees ask what the budget of the new film will be. I say the cost of my film is the cost of a leg of one camel in the current $57-million *Ishtar*. I don't think they ever had such a good time at a board meeting.

As I leave they tell me I will not hear their decision until December. This is not good news.

Jane Balfour calls with a brilliant idea: she has convinced Peter Flood to sanction a small amount of money so that I can finance the workshop. This means I don't have to borrow money for the two months ahead.

My Plan of Action:

- 1 June—31 July: Workshop for street-kids. Simultaneous fund-raising in India/France/America. Pre-production: location permissions, major casting finalised, potential heads of crew in place.
- 1 August—15 August: Disband workshop; continue scene rehearsals with cast and kids; get lines memorized by children. Finalise money-deals; work towards final contract.
- 15 August—30 August: Sandi arrives; commence shotbreakdowns; finalise locations for each scene; finalise equipment package; finalise all casting of fifty-four speaking parts.
- 1 September: Shooting begins.

There is no point to the momentum created by the children's workshop if not followed by shooting. We MUST shoot the finale of the film in the Ganpati festival which is at the end of August/

early September, depending on the moon. That is the absolute deadline for the beginning of the shoot. Nothing will make sense if we don't make it by then. And once we begin we must finish—I can't afford foreign crew sitting around in India with rented cameras from LA.

BOMBAY / 2 JUNE 1987 / JOURNAL

Things are happening, even though there's no sign of real money yet. Mini flew in from London, Nilita came in from Delhi, and Naina's very kindly given us her wonderful flat on D N Road in the heart of town. Barry and Raghu are here too. We seem to have taken over National and Grindlay's; Naina's neighbour, Arvind, has given us his roof too. Sooni fine-tunes the fifth draft in one room, Mini, Nilita and I look at a map of Bombay city and target areas around Grant Road where kids hang out—Chowpatty beach, VT station, Bombay Central and Grant Road station. Mitch and our fantastically intense, wiry Assistant Director—Hassan Kutty—are combing the streets looking for the right locations. I am constantly referring to Mitch's old photographs of Bombay.

We rent Wigram Hall, part of a church complex off Grant Road. It is perfect for the workshop: tall ceilings, arched windows, a long, wide space with a stage at the end. The old watchman looks highly suspicious when we describe our forthcoming activities in the place.

BOMBAY / 17 JUNE 1987 / JOURNAL

Mini and Nilita have walked the streets talking to kids everywhere about doing 'a theatre workshop on your lives.' They keep it purposely vague. They create a system: to every child who seems interested, they give a chit of paper with the address of Wigram Hall and the date the workshop begins. According to their calculations, about 150 kids say they're going to come.

The First Day: Barry, Raghu, Sooni, Nilita, Mini, Anil, Gautam and I wait at Wigram Hall. About six kids show up. We wait another half-hour. No more. We look at each other and wonder what's happening. Then we decide to fan out and comb

the area around Grant Road. Sure enough, we see about forty odd children with chits in their hands, asking various *paanwallas* where Wigram Hall is! By the end of day, the count totals 130 children.

18 JUNE 1987 / NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP

RASHID: How my mother describes me to others: 'He was useless at studies, he would beat his sister, he would steal, he should leave my house—*vo ghar ki izzat pur thookta tha.*' (He would spit on the honour of this house.)

One kid spoke of his younger sister who died so young—'*Uski yaad aati hai. . . kuch gur channa khaake, putha nahin kya hua, murr gayi. Aise hi.*' (I think of her so much. . . she ate molasses and chickpeas, don't know what happened, she died.) He starts to cry. The other children look at him and say, *'Yaad aa rahi hai, yaad aa rahi hai.'* (He's thinking of her now, he's thinking of her.)

DILIP DAS:*Mera muluk mein jao poocho—mera maa-baap koi nahin hain—lawaaris buccha hoon mein—to phir kya hua?* (Go to my village and ask—my mother-father have died, I've nobody—I'm all alone—and so what?)

We could have a speech in the Chiller Room* scene, incorporating Rashid's words above with another child who said:

'What is outside for me? If I go to my mother, I have to go with money. *Kahegi—"Note do."* (She'll say: give me money.) If I go to my father, *kahega—"chootar pay laathi do."* ' (He'll say: give his arse a licking.)

SARFU: Mughalsarai *mein maar khaya,* Ranchi *mein maar khaya,* Poona *mein maar khaya, Dilli mein maar khaya,* Gaya *mein maar khaya—sirph Bumbai* Central *mein mainey maar khaana bund kiya; na khaya aur na khaaunga.*' (I got beaten in Mughalsarai, got beaten in Ranchi, got beaten in Poona, got beaten in Delhi, got beaten in Gaya—only in Bombay Central did I stop taking the beatings; I haven't taken the beating here, and I

* Slang for Children's Room, a Remand Home for children accused of vagrancy and petty crime. *Chiller* means small change in Hindi.

won't take the beating no more.)

*

A note to myself about Chillum's relationship towards Chaipau: Protectiveness towards him—exploits him as he cares for him. Is there love left in Chillum's druggie nature? Chaipau is his one anchor while he suffers withdrawal—Chillum uses him.
Raghu to become more selfish, obsessive, focussed on himself.

19 JUNE 1987 / NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP

Discussion: The First Day in Bombay

TASLEEM: I burnt my brother's scooter in Delhi. I don't know why. I was so scared I left. I haven't changed my clothes since. (Tasleem is still dressed in typically wide Muslim pyjamas and *kurta*—straight from Jama Masjid, Old Delhi.) I came, ate *tupori*, slept—woke to find my money gone.

FRANCIS: My step-father beats me—I left home, stay in the *darga—Mun nahin lagta ghar mein* (My heart does not feel good at home).
SHAFIQ: Came with a *Bumbaiya* friend from Bangalore—*Mujhe bola, chull Bumbai chull* (He told me, come let's go to Bombay, let's go!). I came and saw the sea for the first time.

SARFU: Came to Chowpatty with Munna—*Randi ka beta, bahut paise wala, sipaahi aaya, chootar pur lathi maara* (Munna—a whore's son, a boy with lots of money, a policeman came, gave my arse a licking with his stick)—went to sleep on the sand—woke to find people massaging other people's bodies. Bombay was the first time I ever felt the cold air from a fan.

20 JUNE 1987 / NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP

Dreams and Fantasies

YUNUS: If you pee in a circle and sleep in the centre of it, you get no bad dreams. If you put a leather slipper under your pillow, you get no bad dreams.

ANTHONY: I was sleeping inside in the monsoon time—dreaming of my mother cursing me for our home being so wet—

woke up to find my own sheet wet with rain—*Dhumki mila supne mein* (I was threatened in my dreams.)

BABU: I dreamt my mother took me home, fed me, bathed me and told me to sleep. I slept and thought my brother was waking me. I woke to find it was the *havaldar* poking his stick into me. I dreamt somebody grabbed my hair and stuck my face into a bowl of chillies.

SUBHASH: I wish I had magic power.

SHEKHAR: I saw a woman in a white *sari* dancing in a *maidan* in heavy rain—I asked all those around me about her—nobody saw her. I did. I was tormented for two hours by her image in front of my eyes. Then I slept and was sick for three weeks with fever.

NOTES TO MYSELF ABOUT WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

- 22 June—27 June: Inform the kids on the 24th that we're working towards making a movie; tell them the story, situations, and characterizations; use various combinations of children for improvisations, parallel the current style of the workshop. Spend more time working with the girls, and with the three Solasaals (two from Kamathipura, the other being Chanda Sharma).
- 29 June – 4 July: Improvisations based on script continue; record on videotape, fine-tune script, rehearse again. Screen-test various Chaipaus (Shafiq, Rashid) with Chillum.
- 6 July – 11 July: Casting of children finalised. Rehearse in Wigram Hall with videocamera; bring in Solasaal and Manju to work with the gang of boys.
- 13 July – 18 July: Combination of rehearsals with children and actors at Wigram Hall, plus videotaping on the streets with children.
- 20 July – 25 July: Videoshooting of certain scenes with the children on real locations in the streets. Tie in auditions and rehearsals of Manju and Solasaal.

Barry's Emphasis in Workshop:

1. Voice and Speech

2. Mime and Movement
3. Emotionality
4. Opening up themselves
5. Clarity in Performance

22 JUNE 1987 / NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP

Irfan, an actor from NSD, tells me an absurdist Chiller Room story. A boy gets up in the middle of the night and asks the *havaldar* if he can piss.

Havaldar: *Pishaab karega?*
Boy: *Haan, pishaab karega.*
H(getting up to hit him): *Pishaab aa raha hai? Jub ma ki pet mein tha, tub tujhe maalum tha ki pishaab aayega? Kyu aaya? Kiss liye aaya?*
The boy looks nonplussed. The *havaldar* hits him.
H: *Ubb pishaab aata hai?*
B: *Nahin.*
H: *Pishaab nahin aata hai? Kyu? Saala* liar*! Kyu nahin aaya pishaab?*

(Security Guard: Want to piss?
Boy: Yes, I want to piss.
SG (*getting up to hit him*): Is the piss coming? When you were in your mother's stomach then did you know that you were wanting to piss? Why do you want to piss? For what reason do you want to piss?
Boy looks nonplussed. The security guard hits him.
SG: Now do you want to piss?
B: No.
SG: Now your piss is not coming out? Why? Bloody liar! Why isn't the piss coming?)

*

Activities in the Chiller Room are completely irrelevant to the boys' real world. Example: sewing imported buttons onto shirts.

*

Image of how boys bathe in the Chiller Room at Dongri:

Stand nude in rows. The Superintendent sprays them rapidly with a large hose, like a military drill. Soap is passed quickly from one hand to another—you're supposed to just to run it through the hair—no place else. If you do, you get beaten. Superintendent returns with the hose and sprays it across the boys' heads in a straight line.

Exercises in the Chiller Room: Instead of chanting *Ek-Do* (One-Two) the group chants Cake-*Do!* (Give us Cake!)

*

SOME IDEAS FOR IMPROVISATIONS

1. On seeing an aeroplane for the first time—at night—taking off above their heads—connect to a dream of going some-place.

2. Chaipau-Chillum and gang. CP loses the gang's garbage. The gang beats him up. Chillum stands up for Chaipau.

3. Returning from the wedding with food in their shirts—the cop catches them arbitrarily—what would you do?

4. Family scenes: Mother visits a son in Dongri Chiller Room—doesn't want him back. Son promises to be good but mother is firm.

5. The gang confront a *gardalu* (brown sugar addict)—the conversation between them.

6. Chillum tries to con Chaipau out of money. Chaipau relents. Could be connected to 2. above.

7. *Dosti* and *Dhoka* (Friendship and Betrayal) with the little kids.

8. The celebration after the break-in: what would the children like to do?

22 JUNE 1987 / NOTES FROM THE WORKSHOP

1. Isolation exercises—head to toe.

2. A lesson in mime: each person mimes waking-up, bathing, dressing.

3. Vocal exercises: sounds, a word, a sentence clearly repeated with different expressions each time: *Dille se Dehradun tuk*

(from Delhi to Dehradun)—said flatly, with horror, surprise exclamation, boredom.

During the tea-break, Sarfu tells me how he killed three rats last night in Bombay Central platform: catch each one by the tail, smash its head on the ground, keep it next to your pillow to let the other rats know you're serious.

Raju sings a beautiful nonsense lullaby:

Soja beti soja
Laal patang pe so jaa
Abba-Miyan aayenge
Laal khilone laayenge
Khelte khelte bhookh lagi
Khaaja beti khaaja
Moomphali khaaja
Moomphali mein daana nahin
Tum humare nana nahin
Nana gaye dilli
Dilli se laaye billi
Billi ko bucche hue
Allah-mian sucche hue

(Sleep baby sleep
Sleep on the bright red kite
Your father will be coming soon
Red toys he will bring you soon
Playing playing you get hungry
Eat baby eat
Monkeynuts you eat
Monkeynuts don't have seeds
You are not my grandfather
Grandfather's gone to Delhi
From Delhi he brings a kitty
Kitty has many kittens
Allah my father is Truth.)

TODAY'S DEBATE: ARE CHILLER ROOMS NECESSARY?

I thought there would be no kids debating *for* the existence of

Chiller Rooms, but quite naturally the kids split up into two vociferous groups.

Against:

MANOJ: *Jub main* Dongri *se nikla, main lukdi ke jaise tha. Taakatdaar hone chahiye tha—sarkar ki roti khaake. Billi bhi sher ban jaati hai* Dongri *mein. Jab ḅuccha maa ki god mein hota hai, to chori nahin karta hai. Jub duniya mein ek chor paida hua, tub laakhon chor ban jaate hain. Jub kanoon undha hai, tub insaan chor kaise nahin banega? Humko to marna nahin—jub insaaniyat se bhaagte hain, tub mujboori chor bunna purta hai.*

(When I came out of Dongri I was like a stick. I should have been strong—eating the bread of the Government of India. In Dongri, even kittens become lions. When a baby is in his mother's arms, then he does not know how to steal. When one thief is born in the world it automatically creates a hundred others. When justice is blind, then how can a human being not become a thief? I don't want to die—when humanity escapes us, we are forced to become thieves to survive.)

BABU: *Kapda badalne ke* time *maar pudti hai.* Line *mein khara hone ke* time *maar pudti hai. Khaana ke* time *bhi maar pudti hai. Prathna ke* time *bhi maar pudti hai. Ye kyon maar khana humko?*

(While changing clothes you get beaten. Stand in line you get beaten. While eating you get beaten. Even during prayers you get beaten. Why should I take all this beating?)

ZAFAR: *Maa-baap bhi bucchon ko* Dongri *mein bharte hain—kyon? Sudharne ke liye.*

(Even mothers and fathers put their children into Dongri—why? To become good again.)

SHEKHAR: When my father taunts me and says—you go to work and smoke *bidis*, drink, smoke *charas* in the bathroom—when I get challenged like this, what can a kid do? I do it ALL now.

For:

SUBHASH: It's better in the Chiller Room if you want to reform. At least you get three meals a day, not like in the streets where you don't know where the next meal is coming from. You get clothes—so what if it's a uniform? And in the monsoon, you have a roof over your head.

BOMBAY / 23 JUNE 1987 / NOTES

Sooni and I have a discussion with Nana about Baba's character. Some of the questions:

- What is his emotional graph? His background, past, what made him what he is?
- What is the motivation that keeps him going in this manner, i.e.: no smoking, no drinking, so understatedly menacing?
- Some scenes are similar in their cumulative shape and effect:

  1. Post Chillum-sacking—taunting him—ends in Baba storming off.

  2. Post Rekha's return from the rich customer—erotic powerplay—fight—Baba storms off.
- There should be something to suggest the relationship Baba and Rekha used to share years ago. Perhaps Solasaal's entry into their lives could trigger off a memory.
- Exactly how does Baba feel about Manju? Is she his child or did he inherit her with Rekha?
- What kind of man would have his woman do *dhanda* while she lives with him?

BOMBAY / JULY 1987 / JOURNAL

The Meeting of The Union of Madames in Kamathipura.

The Meeting Point for the film crew in the red-light area is the Poonam Beer Bar, a tiny, L-shaped, low-ceilinged establishment across from the 14th Lane of Kamathipura where women in shocking-pink nylon *saris* and gaudy-flowered blouse-petticoats wearing hair ribbons of screaming colours solicit all sorts of men: twenty rupees for an hour, two hundred for an evening, double-and-above for overnight. Children play in old monsoon puddles,

street vendors sell everything from plastic hairclips and *bindis* to gaily-coloured ribbons and buckets, red-turbanned ear-cleaners silently spoonglide dirt out of local ears, young men in tight trousers crowd around carrom-boards, and everywhere sit women, young and old, picking at each other's hair for lice.

I am brought here by Doctor Gilada, and introduced to The Union of Brothel-Owners, sixteen bejewelled Madames, the weight of their gold ear-rings making their ear-lobes droop to their shoulders. These women have risen from the bottom rung of the ladder of prostitution, and now, in owning large brothels, they are the controllers of the district of Kamathipura. Of course, as they matter-of-factly explain to me, prostitution is legal but they still have the euphemistic *haftas* (literally, 'weeklies' in colloquial Hindi) to pay the policemen for their 'protection'. And there in the Beer Bar, as Bappi Lahiri blares his latest derivative disco number from All India Radio and as we sip *chai* (good ladies do not drink beer) I tell them the story of the film I want to make right here in their frontyards, in their brothels, with roles for many of them. I tell them the story of Solasaal, or Sweet Sixteen, the young Nepali virgin who is betrayed into prostitution by a middleman, sold to a Madame for 10,000 rupees, who in turn tames the rebellious girl and sells the highly-prized deflowering of her to the highest bidder. The Madames listen quietly, an occasional smile (of recognition, I like to think) flitting across their lined faces. Will they let me film here? I ask directly. I will respect their wishes, I will pay a location fee, I will work out in the streets for two weeks and in one of their brothels for six days, my business will be during the day, their business is at night, I know. The Madames listen, not saying a word, not looking at each other for corroboration. Slowly, Rukminibai, a short, strong woman with a kind face rises from the formica table and comes towards me. She pulls me into a tight embrace; I hear the sound of her heavy gold anklets jangling and the thick fragrance of coconut-oil in her hair. 'A woman like us!' she says, 'You will be welcome.'

BOMBAY / 7 JULY 1987 / JOURNAL

Everything is proceeding apace, except the finance. Channel 4's

offer is firm, to get their money I have to show that I have the remaining fifty-one per cent of the budget in hand. Am not yet desperate though. I don't know the rich in Bombay but have sent proposals around to friends of Arvind Sethi who might want to invest. They don't even call me back. I've chewed endless *paans* in the Naaz building with Hindi-*fillum* distributors—they think I'm nuts to expect money from them: no stars, just Junky People from the streets and you think you're going to make money?

I ask Nilita to work on a personal report of our workshop activities. I ask Sooni to edit her marvellous B & W portraits of kids in the workshop. We make three handmade albums with Sooni's pictures, with the essay on the workshop, and I send these packages all over the world: One, to Pinewood Foundation, New York. Two, to La Sept Television, France. Three, to Doordarshan and NFDC, Bombay, accompanied by clear, strong letters. Something should work.

JULY 1987 / A REPORT ON THE THEATRE WORKSHOP / BY NILITA VACHANI

Background, Concept and Objectives

In Bombay, more than two million children live and work on the streets. They lead precarious and uncertain lives, earning a few rupees a day, barely enough for their meals. Some work at the city's garbage dumps, collecting plastic, tin and paper for recycling. Some are small-time entertainers on the city's commuter trains, others fetch and carry luggage at train stations, some are professional pick-pockets. There are even children who give middle-class kids joy rides in the toy cars that speckle Bombay's Chowpatty beach. The children we work with are pavement-dwellers on the city's crowded streets. Others spend their nights on railway platforms; some on the beach whenever the weather permits, others who have families live in the city's designated slum areas.

These children are not, for the most part, drawn from a native population, but in fact, represent a wide cross-section of Indian communities from all over the country. The majority are run-aways. Some are lured by the city's image of glamour and wealth

disseminated far and wide by the film industry and television. Others are motivated by a desire to escape village life, to make a fortune in Bombay. Many have run away from authoritarian, sometimes vicious parents. Ramu fell asleep on a train one day, on one of his scrap collection rounds. He woke up to find himself in Bombay! He had never seen such a huge city before and decided to stay.

Mira Nair, the Director, and Sooni Taraporevala, the Script-writer, spent two months with some street-children while researching the film's script. It became evident that the harsh details of their lives, the children's essential innocence, yet infinite experience and exposure to the ways of the world called for a situation where the street-children themselves played out their lives on film. Only a street-child could know the reality of being alone in a teeming city, uncertain of his next meal, frightened that his slippers would be stolen off his feet, surrounded by an underworld of crime, prostitution and drugs.

Thus developed the concept of a theatre workshop for street-children, a forum that would aid the writers in further refining the script, as well as train the children in the skill necessary to express themselves convincingly on film.

We spent two weeks recruiting boys in the age group of eight to seventeen from the pavements, slums and railway stations. On the first few days of the workshop, we had no less than 130 boys on our hands—eager, curious, restless, bored, self-conscious, even disruptive. From the chaos of the early days until the present time when the workshop has entered its fourth week, the progress made with the children has been very encouraging. We now work with nineteen spirited and expressive actors in an environment that is certainly unparalleled in the Indian cultural context, one based on affection and trust, that crosses boundaries of class, community, age and sex, and involves a mutual growth and development. Just as the children have benefitted from the training, the family and fun, and the channels of creative expression that the workshop has given them, so has the script developed in complexity by this association, and our lives have been enriched by this close contact with a world that was present all around us, yet impenetrable.

Says Barry John, Director of the workshop, 'This is for me the

ideal school, one I have never encountered elsewhere. These kids arrive one hour before time, they never want to leave, they want to work all the time, even on Sundays; they listen to anything you tell them, they want to try everything and yet they're totally free . . . it's a democratic process.'

Structure and Progression of the Workshop

For the first few days we concentrated on making the children play games where they ran around, danced, yelled, just had a lot of fun. This immediately broke the ice, the kids got to know one another and us, and began to interact as a group. Theatrical exercises like 'Action-Reaction', 'Mirroring' and 'Follow the Leader' provided play on the one hand, while introducing imaginative expressiveness into that play. A warm-up session of physical exercise continues to be part of the routine of the workshop, familiarizing the children with various body movements and training them to control and creatively employ those movements.

In the second week we broke the kids up into age groups of eight to thirteen and fourteen to seventeen and began to meet with them in separate sessions, working with their emotional makeup, their awareness of self, their feelings, reactions and responses to the world around them. The workshop addressed the following questions:

- Who am I?
- What have I been through?
- What are my dreams and fantasies?
- How do others see me?
- What is my relationship with my family?
- How am I with my friends?
- What is my relationship with authority figures like the policeman, the boss at work, the gang leader?
- What does my work mean to me, and money?

These questions were addressed in a variety of different ways. In one session, the children drew portraits of themselves and their friends. Discussions took place leading to improvisations involving role-playing.

Rashid, a ten-year-old boy who lives in Bombay Central railway station, told us what it was like to sleep on the railway platform every night. Just as he'd make himself comfortable on the hard platform and drift off to sleep, a policeman would come along, poke him in the ribs with his stick and tell him to move along. So Rashid would walk away, wait a while then settle himself on the far end of another platform. Again he would be cuffed and woken up by another cop. This would continue long into the night, and it would be only at about two a.m. that the cops would leave and Rashid would manage to catch a few hours of sleep. He would then have to wake up at the crack of dawn and leave before the cops began their rounds again.

Rashid simply portrayed an everyday reality, a well-known, lived fear. But for us the situation of a ten-year-old who barely got three or four hours of sleep each night was very revealing and we incorporated the scene into a new draft of the script.

Mime improvisations on simple everyday subjects like sleeping, waking up and the routine at work, have instilled in the children the importance of concentration, of timing, of attention to detail and appropriateness of gesture. Soon the children had begun conceptualizing and performing improvisations that involved miming movement with dialogue. The themes (family life, running away, the first day in Bombay, being accepted by a street-gang, violence and cheating, life in the Chiller Room) were always directly related to their own lives.

In one improvisation, Anthony and Subhash were enacting an initial encounter between two strangers on the street. They sized each other up, there was unease and awkwardness, then Anthony walked up to Subhash and hesitantly began a conversation. Subhash, a gangly kid who is all arms and legs, began shaking his head and gesticulating. Anthony continued with his efforts until the realization dawned on him that Subhash was trying to tell him that he was deaf and mute. Slowly, Anthony too began to speak with gestures and the two boys carried out a whole conversation without words, but with total communication. The entire workshop fell silent at this moving performance.

Children when caught for vagrancy or theft, are institutionalized in homes commonly referred to as 'Chiller' Rooms in India,

a slang for Children's Rooms which also means 'small change' in Hindi. On one occasion, we held a discussion with the older kids on the subject of Chiller Rooms and whether they were necessary for society. We had assumed that given the Chiller Room's reputation for enforcing a militaristic discipline, and the many stories of corruption and exploitation we had heard, that the children would rise up in arms against the notion. On the contrary, the boys naturally broke into two groups and we were surprised to hear some say that despite all its shortcomings, the Chiller Room was still preferable to being out there alone on the streets. The Chiller Room developed a sense of community, they felt, it gave them work and responsibility and kept them out of trouble. It also equipped them with vocational training for the future. On the other side, boys who had spent time in Chiller Rooms spoke about the terrible food and living conditions and the ill-treatment they had received at the hands of older kids and institution officials. Manoj who has spent two years in Chiller Rooms said, 'If it's true, as the government says, that it gives us our bread and butter, then how come I came out skinnier than I have ever been on the streets?'

By the third week of the workshop, we felt that the children were ready for directed performances more closely related to the filmscript, and involving the memorizing of dialogue and sustained role-playing. With the younger kids, we began doing improvisations loosely based on Chaipau's character. With the older kids we started doing improvisations based on the gang and its activities, again closely linked to the script. Now we were seriously critiquing the children's performances, holding rehearsals, pointing out flaws and working with speech and articulation as well.

The use of a videocamera greatly facilitated this process. In one exercise, we recorded every child's expression, by turn, in close-up. How would one look when happy, sad, angry and fearful? When one meets a loved person, a hated person? What would be considered a naturalistic expression of feeling? What would be an exaggerated response? What a neutral or undifferentiated response? The tape was played back several times enabling the children to see for themselves what seemed real and what

false on the screen. It was impressed upon them that subtlety is the essence, because the camera is capable of capturing every fleeting nuance of feeling and expression. The children are beginning to overcome their awe of the camera and are losing the self-consciousness that comes from seeing one's image on screen.

On the day of the screen-test, the success of the workshop was self-evident. The professional actors present on the day were overwhelmed by the children's performances. Shafiq, a ten-year-old boy (who was selected as the protagonist) gave a powerful performance in a scene where Chaipau hands Solasaal a cup of tea, and she, enraged and helpless in her captivity, kicks the glass. Shafiq's awe-struck surrender to her beauty, the manner in which he implored her to drink tea, his shock at the kick, followed by irritation, childish petulance then quick forgiveness, were remarkable to witness.

With just two weeks left before the workshop comes to an end, and with the casting of Chaipau and the gang complete, we have entered a new phase in our efforts. A separate workshop is in progress with girls in the age group of eight to twelve for the selection of the character, Manju. Chaipau and the gang continue to meet everyday for concentrated, intensive rehearsals that will culminate in the film.

EXTRACTS FROM A WORKSHOP DIARY / BY BARRY JOHN

My first workshop in Bombay. My first workshop with street-children and prostitutes. My first workshop for a film. Nine to six, six days a week for six weeks in May and June. . . An old church hall near Grant Road station is the venue, the stone battlefield soon to be overrun by a horde of urchinous little devils from the streets, the stations, the beaches and the spaces left between the hotels, the shops, the offices, the cinemas, the temples, the schools, the factories. . .

M and N have been rounding them up, inviting them to a *natak* training after which they may or may not be selected. No mention of the film. No mention of money. Don't want them coming for the wrong reasons. . .

Supplementary to my usual box of workshop tricks that

include physical, sense, imaginative and emotional exercises and games, the kids contribute indoor sports, beach gymnastics, beach plays, sessions of jokes and songs and mass dancing. Physical is not a strong enough word to describe these boys. They jump on you just to say hello. . .

What one usually aims to achieve during the first week or two of a workshop is principally a thawing of inhibitions and self-consciousness, the opening up of various means of communication and the fostering of a group spirit. In this workshop they are in evidence from Day One. . .

Soon you no longer see the filth and the lice. The lean and hungry looks. You see boys thrilling to the opportunity to be children—to explore, to understand, to create, to express. Not conditioned by school, they are open-minded. And despite their regular worship of Hindi films, they soon tune into realism and self-awareness. . .

Themes for exploration: Child Labour; first reactions to the Big City; meeting the gang; initiations; survival of the fittest; addictions; territory and possessions; Hindi movies; thoughts of home; dreams; the rich; suicide; crime; Remand Homes; escape and freedom. . .

The boys are blunt but honest; as direct as people without shame. They are young in years but old in experience. To be ten and living without home, without family, without money, in Bombay, means you have courage, ingenuity and determination. Of course, you also have fears and regrets and despair sometimes, but all-in-all, it is man's amazing instinct for survival and betterment that shines through—positively, loudly and hopefully. . .

The boys don't know it, but I am a runaway myself. Five thousand miles and twenty years from home. I empathize, and encourage the boys to believe in what they are doing. It may be outside of the urban middle-class dream, but there is no law that says we all have to be in on that. Indeed, it is difficult for all true artists, poets, explorers and lovers of life to have very much to do with that, except to observe from the sidelines and comment on the wastage, the violence and the meaninglessness of it all. Some of us do not fit in, and are not prepared to lie to ourselves, to fool ourselves, to sell ourselves in order to do so. . .

Questions:

Is it cowardly or courageous for a child to run away from an irresponsible, drunken or drug-addicted father? From a step-mother who is classically mean and brutal? From parents who daily inflict physical, psychological and sometimes sexual abuse? From a home that offers no care, no support, no guidance, no love? What is the use of sending them back to such a home? Back to the source of their problems?

Is the State the only alternative parent? Is anonymous institutional life the answer to these children's needs? Is it expected that they be normal, polite and well-behaved children? Third-rate imitations of the middle-class norm? The full realization of which will be forever denied them?

The middle-class norm that has us blindly walking and driving past these children everyday? The middle-class norm that says look after yourself and your own—the rest are the Government's problem? The middle-class norm that closes its schools, training workshops and community centres to these children, even though they are often under-utilized buildings?

Are these children criminals? Or are they the victims of adult selfishness and indifference?

Poem:

His Name is Today

We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need can wait.
The child cannot wait.
Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed.
To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow'.
His name is 'Today'.

Gabriela Mistral

Does it all mean that the children themselves will have to function as the agents of change?

BOMBAY / JULY 1987 / JOURNAL / MIRA NAIR

So slowly, 'acting' has become a bad word with our children. For all of us in India, and especially for the children, going to Indian movies is the only cheap form of entertainment available. Our 'actors' have been bred on at least two to three-hour-long Indian movies daily; they know dialogues and songs of Indian movies backwards, always incorporating the latest star's mannerisms and speech into their own behaviour. I know that *this film* is to be a total departure from this formula, knowing that no matter who I cast, I will be working completely against the stereotype of what is commonly known as 'acting' in Indian cinema.

BOMBAY / SANGAM BUILDING / 20 JULY 1987 / JOURNAL

I am alone in this ugly, absurdly expensive, rented, unfurnished apartment with the hideous view of the backside of Jaslok Hospital. There is still no sign of REAL money to match the Channel 4 commitment. Everybody thinks I am the Rock of Gibraltar but an hour ago on the telephone I couldn't control my tears. The film could fall apart at any moment. For the first time in my life sleep refuses me. I work backwards now: Channel 4 says they will match whatever I raise, so I have five budgets now: a 35mm budget, a Super–16mm budget, a 16mm budget, A Bare Bones Budget, A Do-It-Any-Way-You-Can budget. Anil says it is possible. I believe him, but sometimes in my aloneness and insanity I want to walk out to Peddar Road and stand in the traffic until a car hits me.

BOMBAY / 23 JULY 1987 / JOURNAL

Nearing the end of the workshop. Today the top-brass of NFDC visited to see what was going on, and they brought along Vijay Tendulkar the playwright as well. The sight of Malati's (Malati Tambay Vaidya, Managing Director, NFDC) powder-blue chiffon *sari* really stood out in a room full of rags. The children were as spunky as ever while I basically chewed on my nonexistent nails. This could be a bit of a make or break situation for the film.

The children choose to exercise to Madonna's latest album as

the top-brass looks on. I wonder what they are thinking: one *phoren*-returned chick gets a kick out of getting urchins to swing to Madonna. Whatthehell.

Dilip Das, King of Hamali on Bombay Central, slouches against the oil-stained wall and offers his tough-skinned hand to Malati as she walks by. '*Zara haath to milao*!' (At least shake my hand!) he says to her cheekily. She does a double take and complies.

Ramesh does his Murtaza 'screw loose' scene for the audience. The kids clap spontaneously when he finishes. Raghu and Shafiq do the Brown Sugar scene in the Graveyard; the last image is beautiful: Raghu leans his head against Shafiq's shoulder. Our audience is struck too.

As they leave, the kids are excited and all over the place. A couple of them even jump on Ravi Malik of the NFDC. Shekhar comes up to me and asks, pointing at Vijay Tendulkar's white hair '*Buddha ka nukli daanth hai kya*?' (The old man has false teeth or what?) I tell him to ask Tendulkar himself—how would I know? Sure enough, Shekhar follows him to the taxi, sticks his neck into the window and asks him. Tendulkar, the most sporting and relaxed of the lot, tells Shekhar to knock on them and find out for himself.

BOMBAY / 29 JULY 1987 / JOURNAL

Today I understand the true meaning of The American Dream. Mitch calls me from New York: he was photographing Kathleen Turner's summer home in the Hamptons for a job and while sitting on her double-bed returned Celeste B's phone call. Pinewood Foundation's just given us $1,00,000 for the film. THIS IS OUR FIRST LEGITIMATE DOLLAR. We can now buy FILM STOCK, SOUND TAPE AND OTHER NECESSITIES OF LIFE.

Anil is amazed. What a rabbit you pulled out of the hat, he says.

My plan for the budget:

- NFDC: $1,50,000.
- Mirabai Films: $1,50,000 ($1,00,000 from Celeste; $50,000 from us, although we don't have it yet; one day we will).
- Channel 4 will match this: $3,00,000.

- Total budget: $6,00,000 (although with only $5,50,000 in hand).

I am excited that at least there is a possibility that the film can begin. Mitch and I make a decision: we will spend whatever is necessary so that our struggle will not show on screen. That is, shoot 35mm with 130 rolls of film, and not compromise on the shooting in India. If we don't have it on screen what is the point? We will worry about our debts later.

BOMBAY / AUGUST 1987 / JOURNAL

Hriday Lani, Hassan and myself closet ourselves for a few days revising each line of the Hindi dialogue that Lani has translated from the mostly English script. This is an immediate joy: juicing each word for maximum rightness and effect. Lani is the king of street-language—a man who genuinely loves, and *knows*, Bombay slang. The film is coming alive before me in another dimension.

BOMBAY / 23 AUGUST 1987 / JOURNAL

Today, on Mitch's birthday, the problems still loom large. It was the first night in two weeks of good sleep that I was once again unable to rest, first listening to Mitch's breathing, then the ceaseless, relentless monsoon rain, the sparrows and crows, and the pumps of Jaslok Hospital. Finally, the telephones. I look at the pictures of New York, Sahira, my niece and Holyoke with a yearning that is unfamiliar; I cannot believe that once I too had a normal existence. As I manage to get excited about the problems of directing, something or the other pulls me down to the fact of production and negotiation—I have come close to walking out of the financial deal so often. Yesterday, in fact, so close that I felt almost elated, a bizarre sense of (false) freedom.

BOMBAY / 25 AUGUST / JOURNAL

Chillum's look still eludes me. Today we put on Raghu the cricket boots that I had once bought in Chor Bazaar for Irfan. I look at one of my pictures of a rag-picker on Grant Road station—baggy, khaki longshorts, T-shirt, plastic cap put on backwards Ozu-style,

emaciated. Raghu plans to lose fifteen pounds more for the withdrawal scenes—he is already on a diet of *dal* and water. Nilita, Mini and I put garb similar to the rag-picker in my photo on Raghu; the cricket boots work well. He looks more and more like a character with *ishtyle*. Sooni says she likes it.

BOMBAY / 28 AUGUST 1987 / JOURNAL

In the NFDC sitting room, waiting for an hour after our scheduled appointment for them to see me. Almost nearing the end of our negotiation—or the beginning of our marriage. I have no time to reflect on the goings-on; I just hurtle from one problem to another. The financing has created most of my tension and fatigue—and the entrails of the Indian government system of making movies is more than everything I heard it could be. So here's my Indian film. . . .

At the end of our best efforts though there will be a film. I don't want to think of the debts that await me.

Sandi said today—Remember to smell the roses. She is right. Today the soundpersons and the Asst. Cameraman arrived. The monster grows. I hear that Neil, the Boom Man, had one huge suitcase filled with 25lbs of Lipton's Iced Tea Mix, two gallons of Kahlua and vodka, jumbo bags of M & Ms and other American candy. Our budget for Bisleri water is going to go through the roof on this film! He tells Sandi: 'My worst nightmare is a non-flushable toilet.' Sandi, by now initiated to life on the Bombay streets, replies, 'Welcome to your nightmare.'

The Shooting of *Salaam Bombay!* Notes and Anecdotes

BOMBAY / 7 SEPTEMBER 1987 / JOURNAL

The radio estimates four million people on the Bombay streets today: it is the Ganpati festival—the birthday of the beloved Ganesh—every street is filled with throngs of people carrying statues of the Elephant God, small, big, larger than life. Trucks, megaphones, loudspeakers, hordes of pink-powdered men swaying to the chants of Ganpati *bappa moria*. Sandi is on the street,

perched on Tony's sturdy shoulders, her camera pointing at people's faces on barely moving trucks. Mitch sets up his camera on a scaffolding at C P Tank where the four roads meet. Fortunately nobody recognizes Aneeta as she holds Shafiq's hand and strides forward, her face a fabulous mysterious combination of despair, strength and determination. Shafiq is all there, fake blood on his hands—this is the scene following Baba's murder. We surround them with our 'extras'—basically our crew—and in two takes we have the shot. There is no option: we are already noticed—and you can't stop three thousand pairs of eyes looking into the camera and grinningpointingmocking.

The hard part is yet to come. The final shot of the film is to be filmed on a crane parked on Chowpatty beach—the final point where all four million people arrive to immerse their Gods in the sea. Anil and Ravi Sonie (Production Controller) have broken their backs getting permission to lodge the crane on the sand; there it stands, surrounded by a ring of cops. The only way to get the equipment there is assembly-line fashion: forty-eight of us crew members form a winding line through the pushing, surging crowds—box by box, lens by lens, slowly and carefully we all reach the crane intact. It is almost magic hour—the light is with us for about twenty minutes at best.

The shot is designed as a long take, swooping in and out of the millions, now finding Chaipau, now losing him. For fun, Sandi offers Sooni and me the first ride on the two bucket-seats of the crane. We go up, Sooni takes a picture with her still camera, and almost immediately the rumbling of the crowd is heard. We come down, and I am immediately accosted by a Shiv Sena man—'Madam no photography allowed here.' Last year, he tells me, some Germans came and published pictures of the Gods, defiled and swollen in the ocean. I show him our permissions and assure him that our intention is not to film even in the direction of the ocean—we will be filming amidst the crowds only. As we talk, the cops surrounding our crane-truck begin pushing the mostly good-natured crowd back and back. In jest, or so I believe it began, somebody throws a *chappal* at us. The cops pick it up and throw it back. In a few moments, *chappals* rain on us from all sides. A joke has turned menacing. *Chappals* become stones. I

have a knot in my stomach—I am responsible for everybody. Finally a stone hits the camera, and Tony who has had enough moves into the truck with the equipment. We all follow. In a moment the van is surrounded by a hundred pairs of eyes—and the damn truck is stuck in the sand! Anything can happen now. Anything can happen. But the cops stop their needless harassment and the crowd is calm once again. We move out of the truck, and once again assembly-line fashion wind our way back to Marine Drive.

We'll have to think of another ending.

BOMBAY / SHOOTING JOURNAL

Detail: We're shooting the card-playing scene at night on Grant Road. Across the street at least fifty TV sets in the multi-storeyed building are blaring *Chhayageet*, ruining our soundtrack. I ask Harish (Production Manager) to get them to lower the volume. He says there would be at least sixty homes that he would have to enter. He tells me to wait until the news comes on—'It's not so popular, Mira—just wait and see.' Sure enough, just as he prepares a posse of production-*wallahs* to enter five homes each, the programme ends, the news begins, there is no more disturbance. We do the first take.

BOMBAY / SEPTEMBER 1987 / JOURNAL

I ask Joyce (Joyce Barneto, our stunning and tenacious Production Coordinator) to track down government permissions for shooting in the Grant Road railway station and Victoria Terminus. Apparently the railways have made it close to impossible for film-makers to film in actual locations, since a producer shot *Burning Train* some years ago and actually burnt trains! So they say. Today, finally, after days of Joyce pursuing the railway boss into and out of elevators, taxis, railway stations, after dozens of phone calls by Ravi Gupta to the railways, WE HAVE THE PRECIOUS PIECE OF PAPER ALLOWING US TO SHOOT ON THE RAILWAY PLATFORMS OF BOMBAY. Goodbye Bureaucracy, Hello Chaos.

SEPTEMBER 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

The production is laborious, gruelling, hot. Always a huge crowd to control behind the camera, cops, chasing after the right light, money decisions. I am sometimes frustrated with the attitude of some people around me who are unwilling to push for it, to get their hands dirty with work. I never promised you a rose garden, I say. Anil keeps telling me, *pyar se bolne ka*. My feeling is, there will be time for *pyar* later. Urgency is what I want. The film is bigger than all of us. Yet some of us are happy being complacent. But sometimes I can't help laughing at the *chalta hai* Indian rationalization that I hear when I attempt to fire a lazy soul:

GOD IS GREAT MY KITCHEN IS RUNNING.

OCTOBER 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

ShaukatApa (Shaukat Azmi, the actress who plays the Madame of the brothel) is a marvel to work with; she appears to be enjoying herself hugely. She assumes complete control over her one-and-a-half-hour makeup process (tattoos, jewellery, moles, gold teeth) and every so often I catch her from the corner of my eye full-throatedly laughing into a mirror, perfecting the Madame's cackle. The real Madames of Kamathipura give us whatever we need; today I borrowed heavy gold anklets from Rukminibai who offered them to us with a smile. During ShaukatApa's first day in Kamathipura many prostitutes came to me and said—'*Vo gharvali kaun hai? Bahut musth dikhti hai.*' (Who is that Madame? She looks fabulous). For a woman who comes from one of the most refined upper-class Indian families, this is the ultimate compliment. I make her replace her imported bra with a cheap one—the strap must always show from out of her blouse—so every morning the joke between us is that I personally dirty her bra-strap. That's the high of fiction film, I tell Mini—the fact that you can choose your actors' underwear.

10 OCTOBER 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

Today is a Golden Day in what is otherwise a sea of anxiety, impatience, egos, tantrums, debts. The call is at five a.m on Grant Road—the scene where Manju sleeps next to Chaipau and the

gang on the street and Baba comes and takes her away, hitting Chaipau. I have told Babu, Shekhar, Raju, Shafiq and Sarfu not to wash their faces AT ALL when they wake up; of course they comply and there they are, sleep between their eyes, sleepdrool still on the corners of their mouths, unwashed. The street people here are completely generous; one brown sugar addict lends Mitch his beautiful home-made Krishna to place next to Shafiq's head. The dawn is gentle light, the kids almost really fall asleep, the crew is on time. Nana appears, and the shot happens seemingly without any effort at all. I ask Ravi and Vijay (Production Manager) to sit in a *tonga* and ride through the scene—I like the sound of clip-clopping and *tonga* bells. Will mix this track with morning *bhajans*—the sound of waking up in India.

At the end of the night (four locations today) Mitch reminds me it is our wedding anniversary and says he's booked a room at the Taj for the night. Such extravagance. He stops the taxi at the Gateway (I crib—I'm tired, let's drive straight there) but he wants to walk. We go by the boats and suddenly there in the darkness of the ocean is a boat lit up with sparklers. The entire crew and the children are there, holding *phuljaris* and screaming SURPRISE! I'm knocked out: my thirtieth birthday is five days away and I'm caught totally off-guard. Nitin (Art Director) has covered the deck in flowers. We move into the ocean, listen to Bob Marley and eat *kababs*. At one point Vangelis (Dolly Grip) leaps into the brown waters. Fifteen of us follow suit, swimming in the darkness.

BOMBAY / OCTOBER 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

Gabriel Auer, a friend and film-maker from France, arrived today to work out the investment offer from La Sept Television and his own company, Cadrage. Andrew Brann, a legal executive from Channel 4, is also here for the same purpose. It's the meeting of The Big Four. We have to open the contract alloveragain and begin the barter.

They come to Brothel 57 in Kamathipura where we are filming the Madame's confrontation with Baba as he brings Solasaal back after a date. Andrew and Gaby are wide-eyed at the location—the crew and cast working amidst prostitutes waking up and dressing,

brushing their teeth while stepping over electrical cords and lights, the caterers setting the huge *thalis* of chicken curry on the psychedelic-tiled floor of the brothel. The children, of course, make friends with them immediately.

The only time Mitch and I have to negotiate with the partners is after our fifteen-hour shooting sessions at Kamathipura. We go to the Taj Hotel in our sweaty T-shirts and sneakers, first take showers very kindly offered to us by Gaby (ah the pleasure of running hot water after so long in geyserless Sangam) and then get down to numbers. Hassan calls frantically to say Chanda Sharma cannot come to the set tomorrow for her shot. She's fallen down the stairs and has got a black eye. I call her myself. She says she looks awful and can't work like this. I convince her we have no choice—she shouldn't worry—we'll work something out. (The Madame has given us the brothel for only five days, but she doesn't need to know this). Back to work.

By two a.m, we have reached an agreement. We have had to give away most of the ownership of the film, but IT IS GETTING MADE.

In between the budget-making, I've decided to switch scenes for the morning shoot tomorrow; in my new plan, we'll do the scene of Solasaal crying on the bed surrounded by prostitutes and the Madame comes to approve her. It's OK if she has a black eye for this one—I'll just remember to make sure it appears she is hit on the same eye in her arrival scene which we have yet to shoot.

BOMBAY / OCTOBER 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

I wanted a shot of Kamathipura in pouring rain, and God knows we can't afford no rain machines. Sandi and I are with the crew in Brothel 57, preparing a major scene with Solasaal as it begins to thunder and pour. It is nearing the end of the monsoon and who knows when we will see the rain again, so I tell Mitch to go and get the shot with the second camera. He dashes up with Mulchand (Best Boy) to the one brothel which overlooks 14th Lane and walkie-talkies me to come. Mini changes Chaipau into the familiar blue shirt, and scurries him down to 14th Lane. We are ready in five minutes flat. One problem though; the room from which we want to shoot has two prostitutes in it right now,

servicing an Arab client. The Madame pockets our money and says never fear—she simply strides into the miniscule room, draws a curtain over three pairs of intertwined, writhing legs, the camera is passed over the legs, we set up the shot, I walkie-talkie 'Action', Shafiq crosses the street drenched in rain, and I say 'Cut'. Glad it's MOS (Mute Out Sound)—we'll construct the sound of the rain later—for the ambient sound is all moans and giggles and whispers. The shot is over. I tap one of the women's toes, slowly one pair of legs is pulled in under the curtain followed by two others, we pass the camera over, and *salaam* the Madame for the trouble.

BOMBAY 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

I was so proud of Hassan today for his fierce commitment to detail. I had asked him to get me a milkman's bicycle—the typical old-fashioned, clunky kind with the cans hanging from the bars—needed for the night scene when the gang returns from working at the wedding. He walked the streets of Sion until he found the right one, convinced the milkman that he could have the bicycle back in time for his dawn rounds, and presented me with the perfect clunker.

BOMBAY 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

We do the filming of Chillum's funeral with a hidden camera—I want all the passers-by to bow their head in respect as they would do to any dead body being carried through the streets. At the end of the take, the children, little devils that they are, lower Raghu and put a lit cigarette in his mouth. The 'corpse' emerges, smoking. An old lady on the street, her palms closed and head bowed to the body, almost faints in shock. *'Aaj kal zamaana badal gaya hai!' (*Today times have changed—shame, shame!)

BOMBAY 1987 / SHOOTING JOURNAL

Mini tells me in the past few months she has seen me become a junkie, whore, Madame, superintendent, kid, clown, virgin.

You do whatever it takes to get it right.

BOMBAY / 15 NOVEMBER 1987 / REFLECTIONS

The Bombay Street as Movie-Set

They all said it was impossible. They said it was impossible to shoot sync sound with actors in the red-light area, they said it was impossible to shoot kids smoking *ganja* in the Muslim graveyard; they said it was impossible to shoot the railway stations in Bombay, they said it was impossible to shoot an entire movie with illiterate children from the streets, they said if we shot in the brothels, the prostitutes would blackmail us, they said it was ridiculous to even think of shooting with two 35mm hand-held cameras in the multitudes of the Ganpati festival. I heard the word 'impossible' far too often that summer in Bombay.

That in the end it was all possible is testimony to the common determination, passion and stamina of our crew. (It did take its toll physically: the aggregate weight loss of the crew at the end of shooting totalled 200 pounds.) Finally, however, no studios were used in the film. Brothel 109 in the film is in reality Brothel 57; Chacha's tea stall is in Grant Road station; Rekha and Baba's home is a Parsi home placed directly between Grant Road and the red-light area; the gang of children sleep exactly behind the station; the Chiller room is actually the notorious Dongri Remand Home of Bombay, an institution that haunts every street-child's existence; in the end outsiders may never know that the geography of the film is authentic, yet I do believe that in a way this authenticity, and our constant incorporation of the reality that surrounded us, helped the children and the actors bring a remarkable ease and naturalism to the screen.

17 NOVEMBER 1987 / JOURNAL

I am leaving for New York today. The shoot is over. I sometimes wonder whether I can feel pleasure anymore—I am so worn out, worn out of feeling, insisting, demanding, hoping, making it happen. A section of my hair has turned almost completely grey, a la Indira. Yesterday I had a recurring nightmare: a very complicated lighting shot, the light is disappearing as we shoot, we get the take, we don't get it, Raju is perfect in the shot—but I grapple with the thought: will this ever cut? I wake up shouting.

NO GUTS NO GLORY
52 LOCATIONS 52 DAYS
WHAT PROBLEM? NO PROBLEM

NEW YORK/DECEMBER 1987 / JOURNAL

Editing with Barry Alexander Brown (Editor of the film) I have the luxury of seeing my every decision almost instantly in front of me. I swear it's so exciting that I don't really sleep too well at night, I wake early and just long to be in the editing room. The powers of editing to save and preserve and hurtle forward are immense. It is finally such a sane period in the insanity of movie-making. Also seeing *Cabaret* the night before, after more than a year, was very interesting and revealing. On the one hand, I feel like I've come a long way since then. On the other, I felt like just going off to do another documentary—it would be like a holiday after this monster—there is such an appealing freedom and roughness about the form.

NEW YORK / 28 JANUARY 1988 / LETTER TO DINAZ STAFFORD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Dearest Musti Mini Mastaan,

My mood was given a big boost yesterday by the first projection we had of the roughcut in a preview auditorium; an expensive, smooth projection with no stopping to change reels, so you see the picture from beginning to end just as you would anywhere—I expected to be traumatized, but strangely enough, felt quite elated afterwards. It holds together! The performances are in general very compelling, the art direction extremely heightened and real, and the film looks beautiful. Even if I say so myself. My darling Manju is mesmerizing, in case I haven't said so before. The joke in the editing room is that when she comes on, Mira would like the shot from flash frame to flash frame––go ask Anil what this means. Shafiq, finally, gets you in the gut—but I won't say anymore.

Did you know that I spoke to Shafiq and Raju on the phone from London? That was really *GRRReat*—Shafiq is such a consummate actor by now that he was replying to my questions

with his dialogue-*giri* from the film! I asked him how he liked the overalls, and he said '*Musth*! *Musth*! *Zindagi ho to aisa*!' straight out of the Victoria scene. *Chaalu* bugger. His story of him taking his savings out from the bank is classic. Now I hope he uses some of his cleverness to help himself—heard from Sooni that he's very good at schoolwork with her mom. Tell him Danger Director advises that he study, even if he wants to be an actor. Tell him that he has to prepare himself to deal with the world after the *tamasha* of the film's release is over. Tell him this is The Dongri Lecture Number Two. Also hug him from me and give him lots of love from M and M.

My plans for Paris are as follows: depart from NYC to Paris, 19 March, mix the film until 8 April, Cannes festival sees it 9 April, check the prints of the film until 30 April. Then if we get in to Cannes, we'll hang around until 12 May when Cannes begins, or return to the US by early May.

L. Subramaniam, the great South Indian violinist, is coming to stay a few days with us to see the film and discuss the possibility of composing the music for it. I am really looking forward to meeting one of my fantasy musicians—did you know we wrote a large part of the script to his records?

Lots of love to Hansa, Shafi (does he really want to spell it that way in the credits?), Babu, Shekhar, Manoj, Ramesh, Dilip, Raju, Francis, Anthony and all those who I remember, and Darius and then to yourself—your scene as the proper but sexy *bhenji* is brilliant.

Mini, here's a list of things for you to send me:

Lines to be recorded without pictures (for off-camera lines)

1. Chaipau yelling for Chillim—make sure he pronounces it as Chillim, not Chillum—the tone should be everyday, urgent but not desperate—he can stretch out the word *Chilliiim!* Give me a few versions.
2. A recording of changing radio stations on Vividh Bharati—make sure you record a section of the usual: Jamnanagar *se* Usha *aur* Ravi, Srinagar *se* soandso—you know, the various names of people who request songs—but also get me a variation of music on the dial. If you have trouble doing this,

just record separate sections of music, requests, news etc. and I'll mix it here.

3. Sound of *chowkidars* counting the kids in the Chiller Room. Again, an authoritative voice counting numbers. Start from ninety and keep going till 120.

4. Rekha yelling for Chaipau in the Ganpati crowds, after they are separated. Please try this at least fifteen times. I want the variations to range from (i)hysterical (ii) desperate (iii) tearful (iv) broken, with a terrifying sense of loss (v) plaintive, thin voice and any others that Aneeta might like to try.

5. Chaipau yelling for Rekha in the Ganpati crowds, after they are separated. Try this also at least fifteen times. The emotions should be desperate yelling, like the child he is. Not too many variations are needed for this performance.

6. Also I need love-making sounds between Rekha and the customer (could be any male actor willing to do this) to play on the track as Manju entertains herself in the rich customer's house, and as she plays on the balcony when her mother is working.

NEW YORK / 6 FEBRUARY 1988 / JOURNAL

Showed the entire film—two hours and sixteen minutes of it—yesterday. My first audience: Mitch, Adam, Sandi, Sooni, Marty, Jenny, Kinnari, John, Vangelis—and of course, our editing crowd: Barry, Tula and MaryEllen. It was too good the first time so I expected to be traumatized the second. The film felt huge, almost slightly epic in scope. I was uncomfortable with its flaws and bumps, but happy with its innate humour.

Reactions:

1. Adama: Amazing. It's so real, it's got life. Too long, feels like The Chiller Room is a whole other movie, after all that happens to Chaipau before it and after it. Aneeta is very interesting to watch—very subtle face. Mitch says he laughed at the right places—even at the American Big Dog!

2. Sandi: Too intense, claustrophobic, exhausting—everything too much in close-up. A lot of noise—relentless. Needs

a lot more breathing space—Manju needs to be introduced clearer, and sooner, for such a main character. Manju and Sarfu magical. The climax works, the last shot is very affecting. The circus perfect for credits. The funeral too long, far too many shots. The Madame is perfectly over the top. Loved the movie scene.

3. Sooni: Eventually very disturbing, even though you don't know exactly why. Much too long. Needs a lot more breathing space—you know this pocket of a neighbourhood, but you don't really feel the city outside that feeds it. An amazing feat. Everybody will be blown away in India. Manju is mesmerizing, Solasaal is great, Shafiq holds it all together remarkably. Aneeta is very good.

4. Vangelis: Hates the shot of the lame man limping into the frame of the kids asleep on the street—hates it with a passion. Can cut all the search for the *paanmasala*—just show CP running there and then back. Loves the shot of the *mela* gone; the smoking field. The cemetery is the first breathing space. I am everywhere in the picture.

5. Kinnu: She wept the first real tears this movie has ever had. Just wanted to grab the kids and keep them for life. Wanted to adopt Chaipau—he was her special favourite. Laughed at many of the right places—even found the Madame funny. *Dost ne acha kaam kiya*. Felt she knew something of what these kids go through. She was touched.

NEW YORK / 8 FEBRUARY 1988 / LETTER TO ANIL TEJANI, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, INDIA

My dear Anil,

We had our second full screening of the film the other day for Sandi, Sooni and others here and in general, the feedback was very positive—that the film is very affecting and powerful. The acting is tremendous all around, but the kids, man, the kids really steal your heart. So now the trimming and cutting away of scenes go on a furious pace, for there are only three days left for the next screening for Farrukh and L. Subramaniam so we're a bit frantic. So Anil, our fantasy—Subramaniam—is also working out to do

the music—he's coming in from LA to stay with us for a few days and work out the score. All in all, I'm hoping we'll knock the socks off the *junta*.

The gossip articles stink. I'm glad I'm editing the film away from these screwed-up attitudes. I intend to write a reply to *Showtime*.

The Mirabai Films Foundation for the kids is a GREAT idea (except maybe we can call it *Chull Bumbai Chull Inc*. or something) please pursue it seriously with Mini, let me know specifically what kind of help you need—and you have all my support. We should, in a few months, think of either linking up with another organization for the première benefit or using the proceeds of the film in India towards fully establishing such an organization ourselves.

Please mail to *Showtime:*

The Editor, *Showtime* Magazine
Bombay, India

Dear Editor,

I write in response to your articles on my film, *Chull Bumbai Chull,* in the *Showtime* issue of January 1988. You imply that I had asked the stage actress Rekha Sahay to do a main role in my film, stating that I had spent months with her developing her character, 'selecting urchins', working at her home with her for months, then dropping her in favour of Aneeta Kanwar without any reason. In fact, all these statements are absurd and completely fabricated, and I resent the accusations made on my character.

I have met Rekha Sahay on three very brief occasions: first, at my home where she introduced herself to me and I described the role, stating clearly that it was my intention to audition a few actresses for the role in a screen-test with Nana Patekar; second, when she briefly visited the workshop I was conducting with street-children—the children were chosen months earlier, before I knew Rekha Sahay existed (she had nothing to do with their selection as you state in your article)—and finally, at the screen-test, which, by the way, was not at RajKamal but on location at Grant Road. I have never met her at her home, or seen her film, or met her at the various places you attribute in your article. I was

direct and straightforward with her throughout the auditioning process, and although I understand her disappointment about being rejected, feel that this is an integral part of the vocation she has chosen. It is absurd to cast blame on a director in such circumstances, especially when the details on which you base your story are completely false.

With reference to another article concerning my film, obscenely titled 'Is Lajoji* going nude now?' I wish to inform you that no such sequence was ever conceived or shot in *Chull Bumbai Chull*. If it gives your holier-than-thou attitudes any satisfaction at all, there is no sequence in a panty or bra either. Ms. Kanwar plays the role of a strong and resilient woman, and does so with remarkable strength, subtlety and dignity.

Sincerely,

Mira Nair
Producer–Director, *Chull Bumbai Chull*

NEW YORK / 15 FEBRUARY 1988 / JOURNAL

Intensely fine-tuning the picture now. Farrukh, Sooni and Mitch have all left now—a mass exodus—leaving me alone to THINK. It was great to see Farrukh again. HE BELIEVES SANS BULLSHIT. He gave me quite a beautiful lecture, the night before seeing the film, about my future. He said he expected the film to be 'brilliant and indisciplined'. I've done such ruthless trimming since the last screening that he will be surprised. Nothing deviates from the essential story—except perhaps the Chiller Room in parts. Let's see. It's now at two hours and two minutes.

They all saw it. Audience number Two: Farrukh, Sooni, Mitch, Shef, Erica, Wendy, David Dawkins, Peter Sahlins, Trish and the editing crowd. The changes work well, for the most part. The film came together in a smoother way. Farrukh thought it was remarkable, but that 'we missed a few tricks'. Good suggestions for the most part; he seems to be excited about the prospects of the film. Told me to stay clear of the Indian *sitar* cliche for the

* A leading character in the TV serial *Buniyaad* played by Aneeta Kanwar.

music. I have always felt the same.

Left a note for Barry *babu*, in my rush to get it together. All these suggestions came to me in a caffeinerush.

1. Replace train shot after Chillum chases with wide shot of station from above.
2. #57. Cut winking in Manju's close-up to only eyebrow raising; is it possible to extend this shot? Put music in sync with eyebrow raising. Cut Baba's lines outside.
3. #68. Cut CP just as he grabs Chillum before train comes in.
4. #78. Eliminate CP's walking shot to Chacha. Use singing kids as a cutaway in the same scene.
5. SS's close-up a beat too long—just a beat.
6. Trim first master shot of wedding, of the kids running around.

TITLE IDEAS: Oh what a struggle it is.

In the Shadow of Bombay
In Bombay's Shadow
The Shadows of Bombay
Under Bombay
Bombay, Big City
Up Yours, Bombay (I love this most of the time)
To Bombay!
Chaipau
The Chiller Room
Bombay Story (too much like Ozu?)
A Boy in Bombay
Bombay Boy
Bombay Teaboy
Bombay Tearoll
If there is Paradise
Bombay's Child
Bombay Times
Bombay Bound (Peter Sahlins' idea)
Go Away Bombay (Farrukh's idea)
Bombay is Mine
The King of Bombay

NEW YORK / 18 FEBRUARY 1988 / JOURNAL

Subramaniam arrived yesterday off the plane with a cantankerous, old, Greek lady whom he was trying to help. He's marvellously sweet, humble and clear. Definitely worried about the Bowery being so trashed out—put his rings away when we walked out to get some dinner, made sure I'd put on the alarm. California culture shock.

I was finally left alone on Saturday and played some of his music. His composition *Winter House* blew me away. I think it'll be perfect for the ending of the film—a single deep note as Chaipau emerges from the Ganpati festival crowd, continuing softly as he cries, the haunting, melancholy melody sweeping off after he stops crying and looks up, as the film fades to black and the credits roll. I was so excited I played it again and again, and sometimes I wept. Jackie came up to me and asked me to tape 'whatever it was that was playing.' A good sign. She said it was like the old Gaelic ballads of Ireland.

NEW YORK / 5 MARCH 1988 / LETTER TO DINAZ STAFFORD

Dearest Mini,

My black mood lifted for a moment when Mitchu called me in the editing room to say a letter for Danger Director had arrived from across the seas—I rushed home in the cold and *defffinitely* felt the Atom Bomb Rush, a transatlantic charge from Double Battery. (That is, by the way, how one of your credits reads in the picture; *kaisa lagta hai? Apan ko* sue *nahin karneka).*

And then I rang you just to say hello (yes, just a social call—and for the current report on the CBC stars and starlets) but you were out.

I was almost approaching burn-out last week—I felt as close as I had ever felt to those dizzy days of shooting exhaustion—as I strove to remember all sorts of details towards the locking of the picture, spotting music cues and discussions with the composer, revising again and again the English subtitles—but most of this is done now, and as a result I slept twenty-four hours this weekend and am reborn. Tomorrow I head to LA with Mitch to record the music with *apro* Subra, heading back next week. Now I have

enough energy once again to be excited about it; imagine, seeing the movie for the first time with music played by one's fantasy! Subra really seems to be into it—we talk on the phone daily and his ideas are pretty much in sync with mine. We're opting for a pretty spare track on the whole, Indian in sound but with a lot of western base: cello, deep violin, percussion, even some guitar. I'm curious and now excited about the whole process.

Thanks for your titles—I was initially excited about *Bombay Level* but then had to give everybody a lecture on what it meant—not a good start for a title. How do you like *Salaam Bombay!* It's my best so far. The others are *Bombay Bound* (too boyscoutish) *Below Bombay* (which I rather like) but the only one that has something of the spirit of the kids and is possible to say easily is *Salaam Bombay!* at the moment. Keep brainstorming, Atom Bomb.

Give my love to each of the kids one by one, and I'm really happy to know about the work that you and Anil are doing about the Foundation. We can easily use some proceeds from the film towards this purpose, which would be very satisfying and possibly quite helpful for the kids.

What more to say? My emotions are once again seesawing and I am sometimes sick and tired of FEELING. I sometimes want to pour hairdye into my head and heart to blind all nerve centres and then I tell myself to SNAP OUT OF IT AND GET ON WITH EVERYTHING. Fuck it—soon I shall sing that ridiculous ditty once again that I sang on the mountain on the last hour of shooting.

NEW YORK / 5 MARCH / LETTER TO ANEETA KANWAR, ACTRESS

My dear Aneeta,

I have been meaning to write to you for a long time now but life has been extremely hectic and quite pressured at this end, fighting the clock as we are to finish the movie. I see you every day, however, and wanted to let you know, very sincerely, how much I love your performance as Rekha. You have truly brought her to life in a special way—with an extraordinary amount of dignity,

sensuality and subtlety. I thank you soundly, and often. So Aneeta, I think our experiment on film has worked. I am indeed proud of what we all have accomplished together. In addition to your performance, the people who have seen the film here often remark about your beauty and sex appeal. As you would say, *SATAK*!

Hope you are well and that your other films are happening. You're going to knock them dead with *Chull Bumbai Chull*. Lajoji is Dead Gone Dead!

PARIS / 22 MARCH 1988 / JOURNAL

Yesterday was officially the first day of spring but today is the day I feel it in my bones. Gaby picked me up at the mixing studio and dropped me off a few blocks away from Pierre's and I walked home, having a couple of small delightful adventures at the local florist. I bought a half-dozen gorgeous tulips—long-stemmed, a fantastic combination of orange, saffron and ruby—and they really complement Pierre's lovely, airy home. I feel better already—the film is exciting again after weeks of burn-out; Jonathan Liebling, the foley artist, brings the entire soundtrack alive. Even the muscles in my face are more relaxed. We enhance the entire soundtrack by creating, amplifying, reverberating... all kinds of sounds to the already synchronized natural sound. Margie and MaryEllen have anyway created the most skillfully layered soundtrack with wild sound from the streets of Bombay, as well as sound from all sorts of places: Alex's old tracks from my past films, Margie's own sound library, fresh effects, you name it. I love this part of the process of film-making.

JOINVILLE / 23 MARCH 1987 / NOTES

Sounds to heighten in Foley Session/Sounds to embellish our soundtrack:

- footsteps, footsteps, footsteps.
- wet bare feet, cop's boots, high-heeled steps, Chillum's cricket boots, Rekha's heels on the ground and then on the carpet, each with its specific sound.
- the flap of a wedding tent.

- the scrape of sand in the Chillum Bank.
- the reverberation of Chaipau's head being bashed against train.
- the crackle of money, always.
- the movement of jewellery in the film—plastic, gold, diamond bracelets.
- moans, yawns, exhalations, laughter, love-making, sounds of desire.
- the creak of Chillum's stretcher carried down the street.
- the throwing of puffed rice.
- the tinkling of Chaipau's tea-crate.
- Madame's anklets, first an echo, then coming closer.
- Chillum snapping his fingers.
- Manju scraping the frosted glass.
- heightening the scribe's crumpling of Chaipau's letter home.

Today I wanted to heighten the sound of Manju eating the biscuits meant for Solasaal. We solved the problem pukka French-style. Dominique, our mixer, simply called the elegant restaurant in the studio complex and ordered them to bake fresh butter cookies. They were delivered in an hour, and Barry, Jonathan and I ate them in sync with Manju on screen!

JOINVILLE / 25 MARCH / JOURNAL

Today, the first of many screenings to come. The Director-General and Commissioning Editor of La Sept, the French investors in the film, see it at the moment of this writing. An incredible loneliness comes over me at such times. There it is, almost finished, apart, flawed, and being seen in a completely different cultural context. I feel alienated and somehow nervous—maybe it feels too jumpy because of the scratch mix? I don't know—if the movie scene throws the first section of the film off balance or what, but at the moment the first two reels of the film don't feel like they settle themselves into a rhythm but that the film hops from episode to episode. Tell me it's me—tell me I'm just jumpy myself—for I don't have any time *at all* to change anything. That part is over. Now I'm part of the Technical Machine.

The Director-General, a patrician-looking Frenchman, speaks to me before the screening: 'I thought the film was to be shouted in English,' (he meant spoken) I explained that that would be out of context for such a film because in India, speaking English is a measure of class and in a sense this film was completely about class—the class of these street-kids—who, if they spoke English, would render the film absurd. He said, no problem—doesn't matter—as if, shrugging, he'd accept living with this strange language, Hindi.

JOINVILLE / 29 MARCH / JOURNAL

Viki (my eldest brother) just called me in the projection room of the mixage to say that I am now a *bhua!* Urvashi just gave birth to a 9 1/4 lb. boy in Delhi called Sahil. Wonderful news. Gotu, my older brother said: 'Another Nair has been unleashed onto the unsuspecting public of the world.'

JOINVILLE / 9 APRIL 1988 / JOURNAL

We're just hooking up the tracks for the final mix of the entire twelve reels. Yesterday we all felt An Important Moment: the mix of the final credits music over the end credits, preceded by the final shot of Chaipau crying—just like I wanted it, a sob punctuated by the echo of the violin, another sob, until Chaipau stops crying, the violin emerges fully, sublime—it almost feels like silence after the layered chaos of the Ganpati festival—finally both the violin and Chaipau are quiet for a few beats until the picture jumps to black. Margie and I couldn't help ourselves—we both cried.

I ordered some good red wine from the restaurant—the dashing Vincent arrived with glasses and a white tablecloth—and right there amidst the wires and cables of the mix studio, all the technicians (the sweet old leprechaun Andre in the back) Dominique—all of us toasted the last leg of *Salaam Bombay!* I am allowing myself, finally, to fully celebrate this film. It is the best I could do, it is the best all of us who worked on it could do, and I am proud. It has been worth the suffering—and although some of those scars will remain and echo in me for a long time—the film

will remain, a testimony to our common will, madness and passion.

CANNES / 19 MAY 1988 / JOURNAL

Tonight was the world première of *Salaam Bombay!* It was also the Closing Gala Night of the Director's Fortnight; the last night that a film will be shown in the legendary Palais Croisette, the old hall where all the masters premiered their films: Ray, Kurosawa, Fellini, Wenders, etc. Next year the Palais will be torn down for the Hilton Hotel, so with the debut of *Salaam Bombay!* Cannes says farewell to an important part of its history. Pierre-Henri Deleau brought onto stage all the directors who had begun here: Gabriel Axel, Hector Oliviera, Fernando Solanas, Gautam Ghose, then introduced the *Salaam Bombay!* team. The hall was filled with 2000 people and at least a hundred of them paparazzi. I came on last, introduced as the 'youngest baby of the Quinzaine'. I was nervous and terrified, but the crowd was psyched. The film played. A spotlight came on to me, and below the crowds stood in darkness and clapped and clapped, shouting Bravo! forever. It must have gone on for fifteen minutes—then Deleau grabbed me and took me out to the foyer where the entire crowd had emerged. The doors were locked and they kept on clapping. *Gherao,* Cannes-style. I was paralyzed and totally shaken. Finally, after what seemed an eternity, Mitch carried me off to the sea where I had to stay for a long time. In the darkness a young French girl came and offered me a Ganesh *bidi*. Thank you for *Salaam Bombay!* she said.

CANNES / 23 MAY 1988 / JOURNAL

I have completed thirty-two interviews in the last three days. The film is a phenomenon here. People on the Croisette don't say *Bonjour* anymore, they say *Salaam*! People notice my mother's *sari* and ask her if she had anything to do with *Salaam Bombay!* She proudly answers, I am the producer of the director.

Adriana, the press attache, met me this morning with a four-leaf clover. I am one of the three finalists from the twenty-eight films for the Camera D'Or. I die.

At four, Olivier tells me we've won the Prix du Public, a prize voted by the people of Cannes for the most popular film at the entire festival. At four-thirty, I am hot and tense and want to get smashed. At four-forty-five, Adriana runs rapid fire across the Croisette and shouts the golden word: YES! Mitch, Mini, Barry, Marty, Ma, and Nicky scream and yell and embrace. I call Sooni immediately in Bombay. Her uncle Kersi answers the phone. 'Door? What Door?' 'The Camera D'Or!' I yell. It doesn't make any sense in Bombay. 'Just say we won the prize!'

The children of Bombay are with us tonight and forever.

NEW YORK / 11 P.M. 30 JUNE 1988 / JOURNAL

It has been exactly a year and a month since we began the workshop. Today was a typical post-Cannes day. Calls from Samuel Goldwyn—the same folks who thought the picture too downbeat—they'll get burned in the marketplace—called to ask when I'm coming to LA—they would like to meet me. Jody Hotchkiss of MGM called to say the honchos over in MGM (LA) really loved the movie, including the President of the low-budget division. He asked for a one-line on my next film, Jody told him, then he got interested, and Jody said he single-handedly approves up to a seven million dollar budget. I told him that would have made ten *Salaam Bombays!*

Then we took Gloria out to lunch to celebrate her joining Mirabai Films full time. I am thrilled about this, even though initially I am apprehensive about having a full-time employee for the first time in my working life.

And then we went to Cinecom. A swank office with great views all around. Michael came in after taking Sammy to get a diptheria shot, looking very happy and relaxed. It's clear they're trying to seduce him over at Cinecom. The secretary welcomed us in—always a tell-tale sign in my book. And the guys—Amir, Leon, Bart Walker and the lone woman, Shelby—came together to present their package, with essentially Amir doing the talking. He's smooth, cool, shrewd, elegantly tailored in a smart office and hardly ever looked at me. Only the boys—Michael and Mitch—were worth his direction. That part was slightly amusing. Anyway their belief in the film is strong, their operation

definitely among the most substantial in America, and their commitment to the film both financially and in the number of prints was like we wanted it to be. It was surprisingly easy in a way, and more than any other time in this process, I tangibly felt that I had arrived. When I had a drink afterwards with Michael and Mitch, I was definitely slightly giddy with the prospect of New Yorkers lining up around the block around Cinema Studio in the cold waiting to get in to see *Salaam Bombay!* I let myself feel purely happy and satisfied for the first time in months.

At home Kinnu and Abhi waited for us and we celebrated. I called the brothers in Delhi and they sounded like they expected good news from me always. Leon had left a 60's cosmic message on the machine. 'Mira this is Leon. I just wanted to share the moment with you. I hope it feels good. You're in.'

I definitely feel good. Also the spirit of my next film is slowly becoming more tangible to me. Ben Kingsley is beginning to live in my subconscious; I tore out a picture of him in last Sunday's *Times* in which he is dressed as a concentration camp inmate—don't know if Simon Weisenthal would approve, but he definitely looked like a Gujju merchant to me.

BOMBAY HOTEL ROOM / 24 JULY 1988 / JOURNAL

I want to go home. I am tired. Of talking, of running, of constantly meeting strangers and having to do things. My stomach is upset, I drink and smoke and generally push myself to the limit. It is an old, familiar feeling; my body is giving way, saying enough is enough, now calm down and look after me. I will soon. But now Madras is ahead of me, then Delhi, then the long trip home.

Today, the image of Shafiq under Joyce's flowery umbrella climbing under the fence to see Raju in the rain, becoming a small blur as my taxi drove on.

There is a lot ahead but I have to conserve myself. I tend to want to do everything, worry about every detail. It doesn't pay sometimes; others have their own pace.

Today we met the women from IMPACT who want to do the première of *Salaam!* They're dynamic, tenacious, and won't give up. I like that. They're totally in sync with the idea of having the

first show for the women and people of Kamathipura. I feel we're in good hands. October is going to be an exciting month.

EN ROUTE DELHI TO NEW YORK / 29 JULY 1988

Time gallops on and I can't believe all that I've gone through in the past week. First Madras, with fucking Madras Eye: the dreaded conjunctivitis which made me feel and look like sin for the past week—red eyes, swollen, teary and crusty. Awful—wearing sunglasses while checking prints at Prasad labs, just when I need my eyes most. I spent most of two days eyedropping myself in the hotel, reading Rohington Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Bag*. The only people I met were room service waiters who would nod at me reassuringly and say 'Madras Eye, Madam, *naat* to worry.' Missed Mitchu like mad and spoke to him—another dilemma out west with the design for the French poster: a picture of a kid from one of Mitch's earlier photographs, nothing to do with the film. Why not our Chaipau? Both of us are upset.

Despite the Mata Hari look, I did a press conference with a hallfull of South Indian journalists eating cashewnuts and drinking Sprint—I liked being there; the people seem much more engaged, professional and urgent in their manner. Also did some 'exclusives' for a Telugu paper and *Frontline* magazine—*dekho kaisa nikullta hai*. And then the long journey to Delhi—travel in *apna desh* with limited time is always extremely trying.

The first thing I did in Delhi was see Bhaskar Ghose, the boss of Doordarshan—a pukka British-type fellow—very direct, smart but with extremely rigid ideas about certain things. Anyway, over and above apologizing for not showing any of my films since they bought them in 1983, he agreed to give me twenty minutes of national telecast in October, to be used just before the film hits the cinema halls in India. What I want to do is a quick documentary of the kids today—what they're up to—intercut with clips from the film—and maybe use Amitabh Bachchan or some other Big Guy in some fashion—maybe the kids could take him on and spar with him or something—so that the appeal of our film would reach way beyond into the masses. Anyway, Ghose and I shook on this deal—I said he would be a dishonourable man

if it fell through—but he gave me his word. This is a coup and we shall milk it to its fullest. Once we have a distributor, I'm determined to pull out all the stops with all kinds of creative publicity everywhere. Lead Kindly Light Amid the Encircling Gloom—Lead the People to *Salaam Bombay!*

NEW YORK / 21 AUGUST 1988 / ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON / JOURNAL

Finally the glorious rare feeling of being alone in our home, listening, thinking, doing what I like. Always of course the feeling hanging over my head of all there is to do, when will I ever catch up? But fuck it, that is a New York disease—I can't take it too seriously.

Saw Kohei Oguri's great film on childhood in Osaka—*Muddy River*—yesterday with Amiyadi—for the second time; so many images and moments had remained in my mind from the first time. Most of my pleasure sustained itself; the two moments that were absolutely exquisite were when the two young boys, Nobuo and Kiichi return home to the tug-boat, disappointed at losing their money at the fair. To make up for the loss, Kiichi shows his friend the nest of crabs, dipping each one slowly in oil. He then lights each crab—close-up of it stumbling, crunching and folding up, a blob of walking fire—to Nobuo's horror. Against this we hear the sound of moans (of ecstasy or pain or pretence—or all of them) from the mother's room in the front section of the boat. Nobuo, shocked but mesmerized by the burning crabs, follows one crab down the ledge of the boat and distracted by the moans, looks into the window of the mother's room. The boy looks at the once-beautiful woman, their eyes meet. She lies under the tattooed back of a man, her beauty pained, a strand of hair between her lips as the man kisses her breasts. The crab falls into the water. Nobuo is upset by the sight of his friend's mother. He leaves, his eyes glistening with tears. Kiichi is hurt. On the bridge to his house, Nobuo passes Kiichi's sister, his special friend. Her face shows that Nobuo has seen; Nobuo, her friend, now knows that her mother is a prostitute. He passes her without stopping. She looks back at him, very, very sad.

And the final moments when the children leave with their

mother in their tug-boat, Nobuo runs after it, stopping to look at it in silence. After four or five different shots of this, he stops and stares and says, plaintively, very quietly 'Kiichi!' Then again runs and simply, painfully speaks his friend's name. After more than eight shots of him running and stopping and looking, he screams the name once, desperately, then twice. The final shot is the boat disappearing between stacks of lumber.

An exercise in understatement, and a beautiful celebration of the particularity of children. Pain, cruelty, sexuality, disillusion and separation—all in the one quiet sequence of the burning crabs and the mother.

*

I love to fill the frame to the fullest with details—and for the first time ever, I feel really inspired to make a film in New York, a sort of frantic caper, using again a camera to capture the bizarre juxtapositions and chaos of the city. Two to three details since then: A black man playing on an abandoned piano on our street. A red armchair thrown out on Rivington Street—every time I pass by, it is bathed in a different light, a natural centre for a communal conversation of our neighbourhood hoboes. Today a grizzler greeted me with his arms wide open, saying: 'Diana Ross, where have you been? You give me two minutes I'll give you the world.' A very small, plump man walking down Mulberry Street lets out a thump of snot that lands on a car, setting off the car alarm. A car at a red light blaring rap music, the driver and his companion rocking to the music at the wheel. Dumb, small, everyday things in the New York which could be happening as part of the larger frame of action.

BOMBAY / 20 DECEMBER 1988 / JOURNAL

Today we have a reunion of the *Salaam Bombay!* children on Cross Maidan across the shack from where Shekhar lives. On our way back from the meeting, little Hansa holds our hands. I look up and point at the luminous new moon shining in the cloudless twilight sky. She looks at it and turns to me and says: 'In the country where you live, do you see the same moon I see?'

DELHI / DECEMBER 1988 / JOURNAL

Mini and I *maro* a quick trip to Delhi to register the papers for The Salaam Balak Trust for Street-Children with the Charities Commission. We drop into Barry John's workshop with Delhi street-kids at Triveni—the kids are just off a big high of performing their play—*Jeevan ki Gaadi* in Delhi to a very enthusiastic reception. The play is a collage of life on the street, conceived, performed, sung and danced by street-kids. They put on a few scenes for us, and slowly all the frustrations of our Indian bureaucratic paperpushing day fall away. I am buoyed beyond belief by the kids' energy, uninhibition and inventiveness. The final scene is gripping. A kid emerges from the darkness of the stage and sings in a high plaintive tone: 'Has anybody seen my mother?' Another kid runs in saying, 'Has anybody seen my brother?' Slowly many kids come out from everywhere and ask, 'Has anybody seen my childhood?' They form a straight line, almost within spitting distance of the first row of the audience and ask, looking the people straight in the eye: 'Has anybody seen us? Have you seen us?'

For the first time, after months of doing about 700 interviews in fifteen countries, living in hotel rooms and meeting polite strangers, feeling like I'm just treading water, I am inspired to think of another film. I speak to Barry into the night about one day doing a musical, Hindi film-style, with kids in the streets of Old Delhi, performing music that they will compose and play.

28 DECEMBER 1988 / JOURNAL

Today was our first meeting with the children to plan and rehearse the *Salaam Bombay! tamasha*. Hansa is in her new clothes that the clothes-vendor on Fashion Street just gave her for free. Shafiq, fiddles with the boom-box that does not work, Shekhar is trying to look cool under the cloth beret that Mini brought him from London with the Union Jack screaming its colours on his head. Mini looks worried as we park the car. Raju's parents, his perpetually drunk parents, walk across to us as we cross the street. Mini immediately grabs his mother and tells her—'Do you know what you have done is a crime?' The mother plaintively replies,

'But we did it in a temple, with the blessing of the Gods!' Later I understand that they married off their thirteen-year-old daughter yesterday. Shekhar tells me as he leads Hansa by the hand into the field where we shall rehearse, 'Is that any age to marry off a girl? You know, she's even younger than Hansa's older sister Jyoti!'

And so the *Salaam!* kids meet again: Anthony, Shekhar, Shafiq, Hansa, Sarfu, the gangly Subhash, Raju, Silwa and Jariya and Chotu-Babu as hangers-on from Chowpatty beach. We go off to Sahakari Bhandar for breakfast and soon a cacophonous game is played by all the children as they push and squeak their metal chairs on the cement floor. In a while, *dosas* and omelettes are ordered. Anthony asks me if *dosas* are available in America. I tell him, yes, in one restaurant in Queens, for about five dollars apiece which is equivalent to seventy-five rupees, about sixty-nine rupees more than we pay for it here. He looks at me like I'm nuts.

Why this *tamasha*, I ask the kids. Because they've got to get out and see *Salaam Bombay!* they tell me, it is our story. I tell them this is the plan: we meet at nine a.m. in Crawford Market on a horse-carriage bedecked with *SB!* posters and two megaphones—the rest is up to them. How do we grab the public? What do each of us like in the film that we can describe quickly? '*Vo* dialogue, *didi!*' Anthony interjects, 'When, Nana Patekar challenges his woman as she tries to walk out on him—"Turning holy, whore? The whore has eaten seventy mice and now plans to go to Mecca?" '

By now the daily customers eating their *pau-bhaji* are sitting up and taking notice. Some smile benignly in our direction, other waiters hover around the table shamelessly eavesdropping, a couple on the far end is totally confused by this raucous group of street-kids with their obviously middle-class *didis* (big sisters).

Sarfu is totally switched on. He immediately spins off one rhyme after another to get the public hooked on *Salaam Bombay!*

'Angali—Bengali—Kangali—Bhikari—Tuppori!
Apko Salaam Bombay! *dekhna bahut zuroori!'*
(The Blind—The Bengalis—The Crooked—The Beggars—The Rag-pickers! For you all *Salaam Bombay!* is a MUST!)

*'Ram ka naam satya hai! S*alaam Bombay! *dekhna musth hai!'*
(The Name of God is Truth! To see *Salaam Bombay! is Great!)*
Subhash cautions him about the communal nature of this line—Public *maregi yaar* (The Public will hit us) Subhash is our regional and communal barometer.
'Jub tak suraj chand rahega, Salaam Bombay! *ka naam rahega.'*
(As long as there is a sun and moon, the name of *Salaam Bombay!* will live on).

Sarfu is amazingly musical, taking each line and turning it this way and that, like a trained *quawal*. I am most impressed. He is completely at home with his own satiric compositions, both in words and verse, and is completely thrown if anybody else suggests even a little change—he gets confused and would rather not take that line of dialogue. No wonder he was the only kid in the film who spoke his own lines always.

In two hours, we have incorporated many of the kids' suggestions and have created a twelve-minute medley of 'Action-Dialogue-Kisses-Music-Rhyme' all centred around an unabashed promotion of *apna* picture. By this time we have inherited an entire middle-class cricket team in the vicinity who have abandoned their game and are chanting *Salaam Bombay!* to each one of our calls. The chant follows me all the way to Colaba as I find a taxi.

Ravi Gupta has arranged for cops for the Kamathipura screening. Shashi Misra tells us the house for Hansa could come through, provided we put it in her mother's name since Hansa is under age. We must now see the Secretary for Housing to help us get the sanction through.

31 DECEMBER 1988 / JOURNAL

The last day of the year and the first day of *Salaam Bombay! tamashas*. We picked up Raju and Silwa at the Chocstix bus-stop as usual (Raju had given his two rupees to Silwa to get a haircut, so Silwa entered the taxi, gleaming and shaven, and Raju's own long brown curls had been crudely chopped off by his mother), and then, just like another day of shooting, we drove off to

Crawford Market to meet the whole gang.

Everybody stood out in their sparkling white *SB!* T-shirts, and of course, within moments, we had a crowd just plain intrigued by the sameness of our costume and the differentness of our communal group.

Breakfast at Hotel Sadanand: *dosas*, omelette-*pau*, *utthapam* and hot *idlis* and *lassis* for everybody (Sarfu sang: *Aaya re, aaya re, lassiwalla aaya re!)* and Jariya told me his story. The kids don't know his real name, he told me—it had always been FatBoy, even though he was as thin and sturdy as them all—he was fourteen years old and said he and his mother were selling things on a train about ten years ago and the train left without his mother. The train came to Bombay and he grew up on Chowpatty beach. He asked me, '*Didi* are we going to perform in the Ashram in Delhi?' I said no, why? He said he escaped from the Ashram once—(the Chiller Room in Delhi, I soon learnt) and he doesn't want to go back—they might get him. I said no, Delhi was going to be a celebration, nothing else.

The horse-carriage is bedecked with handpainted cloth banners screaming *'Salaam Bombay!*—Coming Soon' and the troupe begins the banter with the swelling public: commuters, water-sellers, oil-carriers, vendors, taxi drivers, jewellers, all simply stand and stare. I look up as we move and see hordes of people leaning out of their windows, all the little office-windows bulge out with *dhoti-kurta* businessmen, and soon people are beaming at the kids' antics, rhyme and breakdance—right there on the traffic-jammed streets, Raju and Mini and Hansa and Shafiq are sashaying to *Chin Chin Choo*. I am on the horse-carriage with the megaphone inviting one and all to A Unique Picture Coming Soon to a Theatre Near You. Five other kids rush in and out of shops—welding-shops, video-shops, sequin-shops, perfume-shops—handing out coloured fliers of the film, predictably plastered with a photo of Rekha and Baba doing *puppi* (kissing). The impact is 1,00,000 people at a glance.

Want to eat Ice-Cream?
Yes, Yes!
Want to see a movie?

Yes, Yes!
Want to see *Salaam Bombay!*?
OH YES!

The children take simple rhymes from ad-jingles, popular movie songs *(Ek do teen, chaar paanch che saath aath, nao. . .*, the current rage of Hindi movie disco music, is rapidly converted by them to promote *Salaam Bombay!)* and twist them about towards one end: a funky, street-wise, popular chant promoting their own film.

By now we are at Falkland Road, the street of prostitutes, and as the horse-carriage moves in, it blocks traffic and causes a minor traffic jam. The children and all of us are breakdancing on the street, and a drunk man and older Madame join the dance. The young Nepalese girls look on, their white-powdered faces and heavily blackened eyebrows crinkling into smiles as they watch this spontaneous merriment. Above us, through tiny wooden windows, little, mixed Nepali-Indian children stare at us, all the men waiting in two-rupee queues for movie tickets at Moti Cinema watch and gather the fliers for our film. The crowd thickens. By now Geeta Dutt is singing herself into a frenzy. Raju, our Insect, leaps off the horse-carriage, lands perfectly on his feet, and continues seamlessly into his inimitable version of Bombay Breakdance.

Today's Route: Crawford Market—Jhaveri Bazaar—Kaasa market—Faras Road—Pilla House Cinema—Dongri—Muhammad Ali Road—Crawford Market.

We do the *Salaam Bombay! tamashas* for five hours a day, until all of us are hoarse, in different neighbourhoods each day.

THE PUBLIC WILL BE FULLY ALERTED TO A UNIQUE PICTURE COMING SOON TO A THEATRE NEAR YOU—DAILY FOUR SHOWS—EROS CINEMA—GALAXY CINEMA—DREAMLAND CINEMA—*SALAAM BOMBAY!*

BOMBAY / 14 JANUARY 1989 / REFLECTIONS

Today, exactly fourteen months and five days after filming in Kamathipura, we come back to honour the women with a good-will première of *Salaam Bombay!* in Alexandra Cinema, three barber-shops (featuring Bachchan Cuts, Hippy Cuts, He-Man

Cuts, Chokra Cuts) away from the Poonam Beer Bar. I am relieved that Ravi Gupta, our pragmatic ally and ex-cop who now runs the NFDC, our co-partners of the film, has sent for a posse of policemen to guard the cinema. Outside its barred entrance, hordes of men try to grab the free passes from the invitees and push their way in. As the women enter, one of our *Salaam!* children presents each of them with a plump red rose. Soon the old colonial cinema-hall is filled with women, girls and men clutching red roses. There is excitement and anticipation in the air. Reporters and photographers from every Indian magazine photograph the Madames with the children, the movie-Solasaal with the real Solasaals of the area, the local toughs posing next to posters of *Devil In The Flesh*. (Normally, Alexandra shows English films depicted in as softcore a fashion as possible; when we were shooting here last year, *The Ballad of Narayama* was being advertised as 'A Masterpiece of Sublime Sex and Sin'.)

The local Kamathipura Councillor comes on stage and speaks into a makeshift mike—'Ladies and Gentlemen, many people come to steal our souls away with their cameras but the people of *Salaam Bombay!* are the only ones to return to honour us!' The crowd roars and wolf-whistles its approval. I am presented with a bright green shawl embroidered with gold thread, and in turn present each of the Madames, women and Dr. Gilada with garlands made of sandalwood and flowers. A song from the film screams on the loudspeakers and without needing any cue, all the *Salaam!* children leap out from their seats and dance, shake, and twist, reaching out for the Madames to dance with them. Soon the entire audience claps to the beat of Geeta Dutt's *Chin Chin Choo!* and we all twist together, bathed in the harsh lights of the delighted photographers. The film begins, punctuated by the crowd's roar again and again with the appearance of each shot of their neighbourhood on screen, and at the end of the two hours, the Madames crowd me and clasp my hand, pulling me to their bosoms. 'I was told this would be a *fillum*,' Rukminibai said, 'but this is true, this is true.'

15 JANUARY 1989 / REFLECTIONS ON BOMBAY

Today I took a walk with Babu on Chowpatty beach—where

street-children work to create amusement for rich children, running target-shooting stalls, Test Your Strength games, pony rides, massage on the sand, or work as errand-boys for *bhelpuri* vendors. I remembered the days when Nilita and Mini walked these streets talking to street-kids 'about a workshop on your lives' at Churchgate, VT and Grant Road station where children make money as coolies, performers, and teaboys, and at local garbage dumps where children working as rag-pickers would come to pick plastic, tin, metal, bottles, cartons of food as a course of their daily rounds.

What then did I learn of Life on the Bombay Street from the children who had made it their *maa-baap*, their mother-father? That A Man Without Shoes Is A Man Without Respect, Be Clean At Any Cost (fact: Bombay street-kids spend more money on laundry bills than anything else) You Mess with Druggies You Die, Dole Out the Dog-Biscuits (street slang for bribing the cops to keep your small street-business going), NO GUTS NO GLORY, Take Suckers for Long Rides, Don't Go Home to Ma Broke, You Beg You're Dead, and so on, street dictums one and all. But go beyond their street-smart bravado and you discover that life on the Bombay street is not all *falooda*. The children can be arbitrarily picked up by roaming cops and plainclotheswomen (called Dongri *Bai's* or Sisters, in reference to the Chiller Room being located in Dongri) and put in the remand homes for months, even years; the children say the cops have quotas to fill, and the savvier you are the more you can tell one child-picker from another. Bombay is where in order to keep our cast of street-children out of the hands of child-grabbing policemen and women, we had to inform the higher-ups in the Central Intelligence Department and issue each child an official-looking ID card (This child works for Mirabai Films; Any Information needed, contact 4448080). After all, this is where I was summoned at midnight to the Haji Ali police station, a tiny room of barred-windows overlooking the popular stalls selling fresh pomegranate and orange juices, to identify one of our *Salaam!* children, Zafar, who happened to be picked up by the police at the wrong place at the wrong time—'just another vagrant,' they told me dismissively, as we demanded his release; where, if a street-

child chooses to go to school (like four of ours did, after the shooting was over) it is a bureaucratic nightmare (even for middle-class *didis*, like ourselves) with birth certificates, powers of attorney, legal guardianships to fill in, and many under-the-tables to be passed out; and should the Municipality, the street-child's classic bogeyman, wish to rear its ugly head, your shack-on-the-beach or hut-on-the-*maidan* can be wiped out overnight.

This then is the reality of Bombay, where real-estate rental or purchase—can match New York's Park Avenue dollar for rupee, where three of nine million people live in makeshift shanties on the street, where the slums boast of more TV antennaes than ordinary middle-class neighbourhoods anywhere in India, where more than a third of the empty apartments lie unrented and locked-up, for fear that the tenants may never leave.

The paucity of space in Bombay was brought home to me clearly this month, when Dinaz Stafford, Mitch Epstein and myself—old hands from *Salaam Bombay!*—returned to the city to open a Learning Centre for street-children, a daycare school which would offer free education, facilities for creative expression and medical facilities for thirty-five street-children. For this a large room is needed, preferably in the inner city where the children live and work. We have, to date, pitched the project to industrialists, the labyrinthine Ministry of Social Welfare, local politicians, you name it, and in return have received solid encouragement, kind words, sometimes good money, offers of a Municipal School forty miles away, a space across the river in New Bombay, a part-time something somewhere else, but not a single room anywhere near the inner city. We bash on regardless. (Please refer to page 170 for an update on the Learning Centres.)

Bombay is also Wealth, underlined and in capital letters. It is where the absurdly incongruous Benetton advertisements of two black children kissing looms large on Peddar Road and Flora Fountain announcing the fact that Italian sportswear is coming to Bombay (to tap the market that has already attracted Wrangler, Playboy and soon-to-arrive Pepsi), where in an unpretentious shop on Colaba Causeway the Indians speak Italian, Mukesh is renamed Michele, and leather-perfect imitations of Trussard and Cartier bags are sold for one-fifth their original price. And what

is upstairs? 'Upstairs Madam, is Gucci, Fendi and Gianfranco Ferre.' Why do you have this Gucci emblem on this buffalo-skin and not your own? I ask. 'This is not Gucci, Madam, this is Cartier and this is what sells.'

Tonight, as we eat *tandoori kababs* outdoors, I notice immense kaleidoscopic fireworks exploding beyond the highrise apartments of Cuffe Parade. It is mid-December—too late for Diwali, too early for Christmas or the New Year, so it must be a grand wedding celebration Bombay style. The weddings get more and more excessive each year (but our street-kids love it; they work as wedding-waiters, double-shift for seventy rupees a day plus triple-*thalis* to eat after work is over) this year's award for ostentation and waste going to the ex-Chief Minister A.R. Antulay's show for his daughter's marriage. He lit up the entire football stadium with giant floodlights, bussed in truckloads of poor villagers from his political constituency who came in and squatted on their haunches and stared at the chauffered comings and goings of Mercedes and Jaguars, Kanjeevarams and Safari suits, jewels and more jewels, until they were each dished out a plate of melted ice-cream and cold *jalebis* after which the long bus-ride back to the village made this dazzling evening be remembered as a Bombay movie-set come to life.

The Bombay Wedding Season creates other surreal visions that Costa-Gavras might love. The other day in the middle of Churchgate rush hour I saw a tired white caparisoned horse galloping down the traffic-jammed streets, in and out of cars and buses. rushing to a waiting *dulha*. Another sight: an old pink Chevrolet convertible chugging down Marine Drive, a leaning cupola covered in marigolds struggling to keep upright against the wind.

BOMBAY-NEW YORK / 5 FEBRUARY 1989 / AIRPLANE JOURNAL

I am leaving India in the early-morning light. The plane takes off in a rosy sky (the Steward, as he welcomes me into the aircraft, says '*Salaam Madam!*') and on the left of me is Bandra in early-morning woodsmoke mist: the shanties, the crouching bottoms, the green, the receding seawater, the highrises, and finally

SeaRock presiding over its domain. It is the first time in many months that I feel good; we achieved a lot in these past eight weeks. The film is a major commercial success all over India, its impact has been unexpectedly vast (a young father told me yesterday that his nursery-going daughter says '*Salaam*' to him every morning, not good-morning as she used to, 'after the film on the *chote bacchelog* of Bombay'); students have on an average seen the film two to three times and know the dialogue backwards; every street-kid I talk to, in Delhi, Calcutta or Bombay, says he's seen the film 'about kids like me', theatre-owners and ushers (the best barometer for a film going) tell me it's broken house records; Pankaj Mehta, the distributor calls me up and says most theatres have confirmed ten weeks booking; Air-India uses *Salaam Bombay!* for its advertising, with no permission from me; people tell me that they really notice street-kids nowadays 'they seem to have so much *musti*'—I tell them, they have always had *musti*, it's just that you never saw them before; school principals arrange special bookings to take their students to the film, and somehow, every day in the papers, the word *Salaam* appears, in some context or the other. I am more than convinced that the film has reached people across all levels of class, region, age and sex. It's like Gotu said, if I were to write a fantasy version of what could happen with *Salaam Bombay!*, I could never even have imagined half of what has actually happened.

Of course there are the usual vociferous attacks, some that I've read myself, others that I hear of, all based on the popular NRI (Non-Resident-Indian) theme—how can you live where you live and have empathy with Bombay's street-folk—or that I've made a Western package, selling India's greatest wealth—poverty—to the international scene. These I should be used to, these notions used to keep me up at nights in mental frustration throughout the exhibition of *India Cabaret* in 1986, and here they are again, rearing their predictable, myopic, envy-filled anything-to-tear-a-success-down heads under the guise of a mediocre thoroughbred, so-called nationalism. This is not a forum where I need to defend myself, my address and my passions—I have done that enough in person—but finally, as far as *Salaam Bombay!* is concerned, the Indian box-office numbers are enough defence. Sooni and I

conceived it primarily for an Indian audience, and here we have them in droves, all queuedup and advancebookinged and buying-ticketsinblack and scalping and what is the ultimate, returning again and again to see the film. There is no more for me to say. With due respect to Amitabh Bachchan who I think is a fine actor, the children and actors of *SB!* are outdoing his latest *Ganga Jamuna Saraswati* and the Indian audience is proving itself to be hungry for films of quality, films whose skin they get under, films in which they laugh and cry at the same time, films which make them feel and see a situation, usually described as so ordinary and boring, filled with so much life and *musti* and struggle.

And above all this, the Salaam Baalak Trust is properly born, and will soon be alive and kicking. After weeks in the doghouse in Bombay beseeching everybodyIeverknew to support us by givingadsbuyingexpensiveticketsprovidingfreepublicity, the angst moreorless has paid off. We raised 6.8 lakhs, have formed a substantial corpus for the trust, and have divided the remaining funds proportionately between the Delhi Learning Centre and the Bombay one, with an additional fund for ongoing support of the *Salaam Bombay!* children. The trustees are few and committed, not just fancy deadwood, as is the Managing Committee, and I want to be optimistic that we SHALL create an environment that will WORK AND WORK AND WORK. I do not care about image, finally about what people will say or how they evaluate us, whether we are ready to remind the public at appropriate intervals—yes, look here, we are actually doing something—as long as we are actually *working*, working towards creating an environment where street-children will be treated with respect, where they will be allowed to be children, where they will discover and be challenged and fail and rise up again to claim their skill and talent and intelligence. This is our goal, and it is a permanent goal. It is a serious endeavour; street-children, like any other children or group, must be taken seriously, the last thing we need is a half-assed voluntary commitment based on whim and guilt and fancy. We built the foundation of our relationship with the twenty-four children of the *SB!* workshop on never promising what we could not deliver, and conversely, delivering what we promised—nothing was kept hidden, all disappointments and celebrations

were public, democratic knowledge, nothing operated on guilty liberalism—time to work was time to work—and this is the least we expect from the Learning Centres. This, and more. We want to create a small environment of trained people who are committed to this cause, who believe in their work enough to insist that they must be paid adequately, who will not let a street-wise kid take them for a ride, who is able to discipline and enjoy and learn from and be patient with the wilful ways of childhood.

Our work with the street-children of India is only just beginning.

SALAAM BOMBAY!

Story by
Mira Nair
&
Sooni Taraporevala

Screenplay by
Sooni Taraparevala

Shooting Script
Bombay, September 1987

SALAAM BOMBAY!

Salaam Bombay!

The children of Bombay's streets are usually better known by their street-names than their real ones. Most of these names are very evocative. Follows a list of names and what they mean (within parentheses) of characters in the film: Chaipau (Tea-Bread), Chillum (Hash Pipe), Chungal (Six Fingers), Keera (Insect), Koyla (Lump of Coal), Solasaal (Sweet Sixteen).

In the screenplay we have used various symbols. These are:

[ ] — Indicates the beginning and end of changes.
[C] — Shot but cut in editing.
[X] — Not shot.
[I] — Improvised. See Notations & Additional Scenes.
[DF] — Scene different in film. See Additional Scenes.
[DS] — Scene originally different in script. See Additional Scenes.

1. FAIR-GROUNDS—EXTERIOR—EVENING

[DF] [A large canvas poster advertising Lucky Circus fills the frame. On it are garishly painted images of a roaring lion and a woman being cut in half. The left side of the canvas flaps in the breeze, revealing a country landscape behind it. A eleven-year-old boy enters the bottom of the frame, the soles of his feet hugging the bamboo pole onto which the poster is tied. He climbs up the pole like a monkey. Perched on top of the pole, he looks around at the view. Another boy's voice is heard yelling up to him.

KID : It's happening! It's happening! It's coming out now . . .
KRISHNA *(excitedly)*: I'm coming!

Krishna hurriedly unties the rope at the top right-hand corner of the

poster. He slides down the pole, then unties the bottom right corner. The canvas collapses. He leaves the poster lying there and runs, following the kid to the edge of a tent that is half down. In the centre lies a mare giving birth. Two men stand at the feet of the animal, trying to pull out the legs of the foal from its mother. The mare moans and pants heavily, writhing slowly from side to side. It looks majestic and serene. The kids watch riveted, silenced by what they see.
A man's hand descends on Krishna's ear. He tweaks it hard, almost lifting Krishna off the ground. Krishna grimaces with pain.

MELABOSS : *Saala*—who's going to fold up the poster? Your father?

Krishna runs back to work clutching his ear. He begins to roll up the huge, unwieldy poster; it is hard work for a boy of his size. He pulls up the bamboo poles from the ground and ties everything together with rope. Then he drags it to a truck which is being loaded up. The melaboss calls to Krishna. Krishna goes over to him reluctantly, thinking he's going to be hit again. Instead the melaboss hands him some money.]

MELABOSS : Run into town and get me three boxes of Ganesh *paanmasala*—make sure it's Ganesh—and don't return without it. I don't want to hear any of your excuses—understand?

Krishna nods and begins to walk. Melaboss calls out to him.

MELABOSS : Better be back in half-an-hour. *(Mutters under his breath) Saala kamchor.*

He walks away. Krishna runs the other way, towards the long deserted road to town.

2. SHOP—EXTERIOR—EVENING

At a paan*shop in town, the shopkeeper goes into his store to check if he has the Ganesh brand. Krishna waits on the street and nonchalantly does fancy tricks with his top. The shopkeeper returns.*

SHOPKEEPER : Finished. Take the 707.
KRISHNA : No, it's got to be Ganesh.

The shopkeeper shrugs, indifferent. Krishna runs from shop to shop—a quick montage of his search. He finally finds three tins in another shop.

3. FAIR-GROUNDS—EXTERIOR—TWILIGHT

Krishna arrives at the fair-site panting and out of breath; in his arms three giant tins of Ganesh paanmasala. *What he sees makes him sit down numb with shock. The site is empty. The fair has packed and left, leaving him behind—alone in a strange town.*

4. TRAIN STATION TICKET-SELLER'S WINDOW—INTERIOR—DAY

Krishna reaches up towards the ticket window.

KRISHNA : One ticket to the nearest city.
TICKET-SELLER : Take out your money.
Krishna hands him the change from the paanmasala.
Ticket-seller slaps down a ticket.
KRISHNA : Where does this go?
TICKET-SELLER : Bombay. Go—go and become a movie star.

5. VT TRAIN STATION—DAY

A train steams in, passengers alight. See Krishna getting down clutching his three tins of paanmasala.

6. BOMBAY STREET—EXTERIOR—DAY

Outside the train station, Krishna walks on a street crowded with people and traffic: double-decker buses, cars, taxis, trucks, hand-carts and bicycles. A cacophony of horns. Krishna stops and stares at the chaos of the city. His attention is diverted by Koyla (a boy of ten) sitting on a traffic island directing traffic.

KOYLA :

[I] [Oh my queens, my queens—where are you off to? I am the king of Bombay, you motherfuckers! Go! Go! Stop—Move, quickly!]
A half-naked madman, chewing on a piece of tin, crosses the road talking to himself. He catches Krishna' s eye and walks towards him fast. Krishna looks over his shoulder and sees the madman following him with his crazy grin and intense stare.

7. BOMBAY STREET—EXTERIOR—DAY

Krishna breaks into a run—weaving in between people—looks over his shoulder and trips over a sack of garbage, falling flat on his face. From behind the sack, Keera, a small boy, appears. The tins of paanmasala *fall. Keera picks up two tins while Krishna scrambles for the other.*

KRISHNA : Give me back my *paanmasala.*
KEERA : *Kya bola, kya bola*? (Say what? Say what?)
KRISHNA : My *paanmasala.*
KEERA : It's just cheap village stuff!

Krishna grabs Keera by the neck—lifts him off the ground.

KRISHNA : Are you giving it back or not?
KEERA (*breaks into song*): Peace on earth, goodwill to all!

A young man, Chillum, runs up with some money in his hand.

CHILLUM : Come on buddy, let's split—the cops are here!

Chillum picks up the sack of garbage and they run. Krishna follows yelling.

KRISHNA : Hey my *paanmasala*—my *paanmasala*!

Screen fades to black.

8. GRANT ROAD RAILWAY PLATFORM—SLEATER ROAD—DAY

[I] [A woman, Rekha, comes out on her balcony and yells down.

REKHA : Ay Chaipau! Tea!]

A large, hairless, Buddha-like man, Chacha, sits on his tea-shop throne on the Grant Road railway platform. The camera follows his hands as he passes a wire-crate holding twelve cups of scalding tea to Krishna (now referred to as Chaipau).
Chaipau takes the tea and walks quickly through the station. Images of trains coming and going, commuters walking through. Chaipau walks past them, to the street outside, past the garbage dump beside which sit three boys: Salim, Chungal and Koyla. They have pulled out a battered tin of Colgate toothpowder from the garbage and rub it on their teeth, looking like white-mouthed clowns. The boys notice Chaipau and motion to him, snapping their fingers. Chungal yells out.

CHUNGAL : Hey *mundoo*—one cup over here too!

Chaipau does not acknowledge him. Keeps going on his rounds. Salim, the tough-guy of the gang, leaps up and blocks Chaipau's path. Teases him. Salim points to Krishna's legs.

SALIM : God—look what happened to your legs!

Chaipau looks down, distracted. Salim pulls a glass of tea from the crate and runs. Chaipau runs after him. The others laugh. Salim stands in a corner and calmly gulps down the entire glass of tea in one swallow. The gang laugh. Chaipau is not amused.
Chaipau snatches the empty glass from Salim and continues his rounds of tea-delivery. He turns left down Sleater Road, runs into Kamal Circulating Library and hands a glass of tea to the man at the desk. Then he runs into Gupta's Time Repair shop next door, runs out again, runs upstairs into a five-storeyed building that is old and crumbling, held up by wooden props.

9. REKHA'S AND BABA'S ROOM—INTERIOR—DAY

Chaipau enters a room on the first floor, carefully balances the tea-crate, opens the flapping glass half-doors into a room. On a double-bed, Rekha lies asleep with her back to him. Next to her lies a well-built man, Baba. He lies outstretched on his belly, his chin resting on his hands. A six-year-old girl, Manju, walks up and down his back. Baba makes little groans and grunts of pleasure and relaxa-tion as Manju hits a sore spot on his back.

BABA : Yes, yes—a little to the left—left, I said, not right, *pugli*—yes there, aah! Aaah!

CHAIPAU : Baba, your tea . . .

Baba doesn't turn his head. Manju smiles at Chaipau.

BABA : Where's Chillum?

CHAIPAU : Don't know.

BABA : Send him here.

Chaipau leaves the tea on the floor and exits.

10. GOODS YARD—DAY

[I] [Chillum sits smoking brown sugar in an empty train. Off screen Chaipau's voice is heard.

CHAIPAU : Chillum! Chillum!

Chillum smokes, oblivious.]

11. GARBAGE DUMP—SLEATER ROAD—DAY

Chaipau sits on the pavement in front of a pile of garbage, winding string onto his top, talking to himself. A taxi stops opposite him. A nattily-dressed Nepali man in the front seat signals to Chaipau. Chaipau goes up to the taxi.

NEPALI MAN : Which way to brothel 109?

Chaipau points out the way. Then looks into the back seat. A young, beautiful Nepali girl, her eyes wide with fear and curiosity stares back at him. Chaipau follows the car, running beside it, his hands pressed to the window-panes.

The car pulls into Kamathipura. Chaipau stands and watches as the Nepali man gets out and holds open the back door for the girl to step out. She refuses to move. He reaches in and pulls her out roughly. She bites his hand. The Nepali man, very angry now, pulls the girl by her long hair, pushing her into the foyer of Brothel 109. Screaming wildly, the girl is shoved up the stairs.

Chaipau watches from the doorway as she disappears from sight.

12. SOLASAAL'S ROOM—INTERIOR

In a tiny room a young Nepali girl is being checked out by the other young girls of the brothel. The Madame comes in and shoos them away. As they leave Chaipau enters with a glass of tea.

He shyly offers her tea. She pushes his hand away—the glass shatters and the tea spills all over the floor.

CHAIPAU : Oh shit! That's one rupee twenty paise.

Solasaal ignores him. Chaipau mops up the tea. He then offers her another cup of tea from his crate.

CHAIPAU : *Lena—thoda pina.* (Take this—drink some).

This time she accepts. Chaipau watches her quietly as she drinks the tea.

13. CHACHA'S TEA-STALL

Chaipau hands the crate of eleven empty glasses over the counter.

CHACHA : There's one missing.

CHAIPAU : It broke, Chacha.

Chacha takes out a notebook, opens it, makes an entry without looking at Chaipau and says.

CHACHA : Five rupees cut. *(Looks at Chaipau)* What are you waiting around for? These are the rules—I told you right from the beginning. . . .

CHAIPAU *(hesitantly)*: How much do I have now?

Chacha shows him the account in the book. Chaipau looks at it blankly, then turns to Chacha questioningly.

CHACHA : Instead of doing all this *faltugiri* on the street you should be learning how to read and write. If I was your father I'd whip you and send you to school. *(Softens a bit and says gruffly)* See here—at five rupees a day, that makes 150 total. Minus ten for all those missing teas and five cut for today.

CHAIPAU : How many days till I collect 500?

CHACHA : 500! Saving for your wedding? A long time—now get lost.

14. PAVEMENT—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

Salim, Koyla, Chaipau and Chungal play cards under a street lamp. The cards have lurid pictures of film heroines.

SALIM *(picking up a card and kissing it)*: Sridevi, my queen! I knew you'd never let me down.

CHUNGAL : That new one who came today—first-class stuff . . .

KOYLA : Give her some time. Now she's all sweet—in two months she'll be saying 'Come on guys, push it in harder', like that bitch Mandakini.

Chungal gets down on his knees and imitates Chaipau with Solasaal.

CHUNGAL : *Lena—thoda pina.* (Take this—drink some).

Salim plays the part of shy, demure Solasaal. Chaipau throws down his cards.

CHAIPAU : I'm not playing.

They all laugh as he walks away and lies down on his bedroll.

KOYLA : You should come with me—I'll show you some tricks to charm the ladies of the night.

Keera pokes his head up from his scooter 'bed'.

KEERA : *Kya bola? Kya bola?* (Say what? Say what?)

SALIM : *Aavaj nahi mangta* Keera! (No noise from you Insect!)

Keera goes back to sleep.

See Koyla look up behind Salim's back and smile. He raises the stakes and plays. Chungal packs. Salim asks for a showdown. Koyla wins—smiling gathers his winnings.

CHUNGAL *(yelling)*: He cheated—he cheated—Chillum told him.

They all look back and see Chillum who is walking towards Chaipau. Salim gets up cursing saala gardi *(fucking junkie) and throws his slipper at him. Chillum ignores them, a grin on his face. At Chaipau's bedroll, Chillum pokes Chaipau with his foot.*

CHILLUM : I'm feeling lucky today—got any money, *mundoo*?

CHAIPAU : No!

CHILLUM : Come on *yaar*—what are you saving it for? Such a rich man and you can't give a small loan?

CHAIPAU : I'm not rich. I have to make 500 and Chacha cut fifteen—ten because of Salim, five for the glass the girl broke today.

CHILLUM : What girl? Got a girlfriend or what?

CHAIPAU : In 109—they brought her screaming—I saw them.

CHILLUM : How old? Eleven? Twelve? Fourteen? Fifteen? Sixteen?

CHAIPAU : *Solasaal* maybe. (Sixteen maybe.)

CHILLUM : Solasaal! *Kya chikna naam!* (Sweet Sixteen! What a sexy name!)

Chillum grabs Chaipau and takes out five rupees from his pocket.

CHAIPAU : Hey! come on Chillum, give it back—last time also you took and you said . . .

Chillum dodges Chaipau playfully, Chaipau tries to snatch his money back.

CHILLUM : Don't look so worried pal. It's only a loan. Absolutely certain thing.

Chaipau still tries to snatch his five rupees.

CHILLUM : I'll show you something in return for this loan.

CHAIPAU : I don't want to see anything. I want my five rupees back.

15. WALL IN GOODS YARD—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

CHILLUM : If you tell anyone about this, I'll slit your throat.

Takes out a loose brick from the wall.

CHILLUM : This, here is State Bank Chillum Branch. Just now it's

empty so you can use it if you want. Better than that crook Chacha's bank.

Puts the loose brick back.

CHILLUM : Thanks for the loan pal!

Chillum walks away singing Meri sapano ki randi kab ayegi tu (*Whore of my dreams when will you come to me*).

16. CRAWFORD MARKET—INTERIOR—DAY

Salim, Koyla, Chungal, Chaipau and Keera at Crawford Market. They walk through the fruit section, trampling on mounds of straw, to the area where pet animals are kept in cages. They loiter around, stop to tease a monkey, look at the rabbits, try to make a parrot curse. They go into a shop. Salim speaks to the owner.

SALIM : Javedbhai said you needed four boys today?

The owner grunts, gets down from his high stool, and leads the boys to a chicken coop which he wants cleaned out. The place is lined with square cages containing hundreds of chicks each. Feathers fly around everywhere and the smell is heavy. They get to work. The owner is distracted by customers. Salim slips a little chick into his shirt. The others do the same.

[C] *[As the kids get to work, the subject turns to animal screwing.*

CHAIPAU : When I was at the circus, I saw two elephants fuck.

CHUNGAL : Sure! Think I was born yesterday?]

17. BROTHEL 109 FOYER AND SOLASAAL'S ROOM—INTERIOR—AFTERNOON

[X] [With the chick in his shirt, Chaipau walks over to Brothel 109, his crate of tea in one hand. Manju follows at his heels, running to keep pace with him.

MANJU : Where are you taking it?

Chaipau doesn't answer and keeps walking. Manju follows him. After a moment, Chaipau stops walking.

CHAIPAU : Why are you troubling me so much? If you don't go, I won't talk to you I'm telling you . . .

Manju sullenly turns around. As soon as Chaipau's back is turned, she runs behind him, following him into 109.]

From Manju's point of view see Chaipau take out the chick from his shirt and offer it to Solasaal. The chick flies up and Solasaal is momentarily enchanted. She caresses the chick, then looks up and gives Chaipau a warm smile that bowls him over.

She offers him the chick. He shakes his head and mimes to her—'No, you keep it.' Grinning from ear to ear, Chaipau comes out of her room. He does not even notice Manju's presence.

MANJU : Who's that?

CHAIPAU : *(absentmindedly)*: Solasaal.

MANJU : What a stupid name.

18. GARBAGE DUMP—EXTERIOR—EVENING

[x] *[At the dump, Chillum sits in one corner, stoned, smoking a* beedi. *Near the storage area Koyla, Chungal and Salim get prettied up. Comb their hair, looking into a jagged, broken piece of mirror. Koyla puts on a battered cap—admires himself. Chungal and Koyla argue about which movie to see. Salim cuts the argument short by saying he wants to go for* Zinda Jalla Doonga *(I'll Burn You Alive). Chaipau and Manju arrive at the dump. Seeing him, Salim calls out.*

SALIM : Chaipau want to come for a film?

CHAIPAU : Ya.

SALIM : Come on then. We're getting late.

Chaipau asks Chillum.

CHAIPAU : Coming?

CHILLUM *(stoned out of his mind)*: No.

Manju pipes up.

MANJU : Can I come Chaipau, can I come?

CHILLUM : Why don't you just fuck off.

MANJU : Why should I? Think you own the street? Think it belongs to your father?

CHILLUM : At least I know who my father is.

Manju walks off in a huff.

MANJU : I'm going to tell Baba you said that, just wait.

Chillum spits in disgust. Chaipau wears a pair of red, battered gumboots and follows the gang—looks behind his shoulder at

Chillum sitting alone. Then runs to join the gang.]

19. MOVIE THEATRE—INTERIOR

[DS] [Images from the movie fill the frame. The heroine, Sridevi, in a bright, glittery costume renders a typical Hindi film song. Keera shakes in his seat singing and dancing along with her. Next to him, Koyla praises the music loudly.

KOYLA : What a song! What a song! All songs should be like this!

The crowd around looks at the boys. An irritated man sitting behind them raps Keera on the head and tells him to shut up. Koyla turns around and says rudely.

KOYLA : What are you yelling for? We paid our eight bucks in full. We'll do what we like!]

20. REKHA'S AND BABA'S BUILDING—EXTERIOR

Manju goes upstairs, peeps below the glass doors into her mother's bedroom, stands with her face pressed to the glass, her fingers making barely audible scratching noises on the glass. From Rekha's point of view—with customer, see her displeasure.

Manju walks over to the balcony and looks down at the street. Then she goes down to her spot at the entrance—talking to herself. The stairs creak. The man stamps down the stairs slicking back his greasy hair with a comb. Manju looks at his slippers as he passes her. She hears the pounding of feet down the wooden stairs. Rekha descends in a fury.

REKHA : What the hell is wrong with you? How many times have I told you that I want you out of here when I'm working? Scratching the door like some wild animal!

MANJU : I wasn't scratching.

Rekha slaps her and goes up to her room.

21. REKHA'S AND BABA'S ROOM—INTERIOR

The lights go off. Rekha yells down to ask what happened. A voice answers that the fuse has blown. Cursing, Rekha lights two candles. Manju enters the room crying.

MANJU : No one plays with me—they didn't take me to the picture—Chaipau wouldn't give me the chick but he gave it to Solasaal and . . .

Manju cannot continue, her sobs overtake her. Rekha bends down and hugs Manju tight.

REKHA : Stop it now, Manju. Stop. Want a story?

Manju, her eyes still wet with tears, nods yes. Rekha picks up Manju and seats her on the bed.

[X] [MANJU : Ma, who's my father?

REKHA : Manju, don't act like a mad girl. How did that come into your head?

MANJU : Chillum said . . .

REKHA : Chillum said what? Chillum is mad, don't you know that? You don't know who your father is? Say, who do you think?

MANJU : Baba.

REKHA : Then? Why are you asking stupid questions?]

MANJU : OK, tell me a story.

REKHA : Once upon a time there was a dog *(she makes a shadow puppet of a dog on the wall)* and there was a butterfly *(she makes a shadow puppet of a butterfly)*. The dog wanted to eat up the butterfly . . .

Manju, the story forgotten, wants to learn how to make shadow puppets.

22. DUMP—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

[x] *[Chillum is in one corner chasing, completely out of it. Everyone ignores him including Chaipau. Chaipau crosses the road, enters Rekha's and Baba's building].*

23. REKHA'S AND BABA'S BUILDING—EXTERIOR—STAIRWAY

[x] *[Pitch dark. Chaipau knocks and enters. He's taken aback by the candlelit scene..He comes towards the bed offering Manju a packet of wafers.*

REKHA : Oh my! Look at that Manju! *(To Chaipau)* Whole evening she was crying that no one plays with her and you wouldn't let her go to the film and...

CHAIPAU : I play with her *didi*! Don't I play with you, Manju?

Manju opens the packet of wafers and asks Chaipau excitedly.

MANJU : Chaipau, look at this.

Manju makes a shadow of a butterfly.

MANJU : Can you do it?

Chaipau tries. Rekha shows him how—holding her hands over his. The lights come on. All three of them exclaim at once.

REKHA, MANJU, CHAIPAU : Ohhhh!

Baba enters the room. Chaipau hastily leaves.]

Baba's in a good mood—goes to the bed—nuzzles Rekha, fondles her sensuously whispering.

BABA : Remember the last time the lights went out?

From his embrace Rekha turns her head, tells Manju.

REKHA : Take your bedroll.

Manju doesn't move. Rekha's face shows anger. Sulking, Manju takes it from under the bed—leaves the room. Baba and Rekha kiss.

24. GOODS YARD—NIGHT

Manju lays out her bedroll on the pavement next to Chaipau and falls asleep.

25. PAVEMENT—EXTERIOR—EARLY MORNING

Chaipau wakes with a start as he hears Baba's voice yelling. Sits up, sees Baba yanking Manju by her arm. Baba pulls Manju off the bistara, *gives Chaipau a hard push. Bundles a half-asleep Manju under one arm, her bedroll under the other, he and away yelling at her.*

BABA : You're not to sleep on the pavement. You're not a fucking street-kid. You have a home—no daughter of mine is going to be seen sleeping on the street with riffraff.

Chaipau's reaction shot as he watches.

26. BROTHEL 109—INTERIOR—EARLY MORNING

Chungal exits from a cabin, sleepy-eyed, buttoning his fly. Sits on a bench in the empty lounge, puts his leg up, lights a cigarette. Chaipau runs in with his tea-crate. Chungal snaps his fingers.

CHUNGAL : One tea here oy. I'll pay for it.

Chaipau doesn't stop. Chungal yells after him.

CHUNGAL : Eh King! They're getting your virgin ready!

27. SOLASAAL'S ROOM—EXTERIOR-INTERIOR—EARLY MORNING

Chaipau stops outside Solasaal's room. From inside, the sound of her groans. The moans go on and then subside. The door opens. Chaipau moves away from the door and pretends to pick up a glass. As soon as the Madame and the old woman exit, Chaipau runs into Solasaal's room. She is lying on the bed, her eyes closed with pain, her face covered in sweat.

Shocked by her condition, he kneels next to her, gingerly puts his hand on her forehead and strokes her gently. She opens her eyes, sees Chaipau—turns her back to him, covers her face with a pillow.

28. PAANWALA—KAMATHIPURA—EXTERIOR—DAY

[C] *[Chillum leaning against the counter offers Chungal a cigarette from a pack of* 555. *Chungal makes a face to show he's impressed, lights it on the rope. Chillum with style flicks a lighter under his nose. Chillum spots Chaipau across the street. Yells out to him.*

CHILLUM : Hey *mundoo*! Hey Chaipau come here!

Chaipau comes over. Chillum takes out a wad of notes, counts out thirty, takes Chaipau's hand and slaps the money into his palm.

CHILLUM : Thanks to your Sweet Sixteen. Take it and run!

Chaipau bewildered, takes the money.

CHUNGAL : Hey *mundoo* your friend passed the test! Hundred per cent untouched stuff! They've got a millionaire to break her seal. After that it's our chance! Save your money boy! What do you say?

Chaipau ignores him and walks away with a frown.

CHILLUM : Should have seen the bookie's face—it fell to the floor! Opening one, closing six, sixteen all the way! If I had more money I'd have cleaned him out.

CHUNGAL : You have the luck of the devil.

Chungal leaves.

CHILLUM : I'm no devil brother. He's sitting up there. (*Points towards*

Baba's building.) Mundoo gave me the tip—loaned me five, got thirty back. I'm a man of integrity, next time I ask for credit don't give me your stories. After all Allah said wealth must be shared.

PAANWALLA : Ya, but not with junkies like you.

CHILLUM : *Ek* Calcutta *to khila*! (Give me a *paan* at least!)

Paanwalla smiles and makes a paan*—gives it to him.]*

29. BABA'S ROOM—INTERIOR—DAY

Baba chewing a matchstick, reclines on the bed reading a newspaper. On the floor, Manju plays five stones. There is a knock on the door. Chillum enters nonchalantly, his hands in his pockets, chewing paan. *Baba puts down the paper.*

BABA : You been dead all these days? I've been sending messages to you. Can't come up when you're sent for?

Chillum takes out money from his pocket and rudely flings it on the bed.

CHILLUM : Got your money.

Baba gives him a dirty look. Counts it. Narrows his eyes and stares at Chillum.

BABA : You knew Padmini in 103?

CHILLUM : No.

BABA : Died of an overdose yesterday.

CHILLUM : Don't know her.

BABA : You know what I'll do to you if I ever catch you selling on this street, right?

CHILLUM : Ya, ya I know. Can't sell Baba's drugs in Baba's street. I only sell to foreigners and other *faltus* who deserve to die.

Baba gets up, goes to a cupboard, opens it, flings some packets of hash and some vials of brown sugar on the bed. Chillum takes them.

BABA : I'm getting fed up—sick and tired of your big mouth. You better shape up Chillum, this is my last warning to you.

CHILLUM *(smiles and says insolently):* Thanks Boss!

Chillum leaves the room.

30. GOODS YARD—EXTERIOR—DAY

Chillum in a parked goods train, squatting in a corner, chases brown sugar.

31. SOLASAAL'S ROOM—INTERIOR

Solasaal lies on the bed, facing the wall, staring at it blankly with eyes that are swollen from crying. Hearing the door open she turns around with a start. Sees Chaipau creep in. He closes the door softly behind him. He looks at her for a moment then pulls her to a window. Points outside and mimes—'You and I—run—far, far away?' Solasaal looks at him startled by the suggestion—then nods 'Yes'. From inside his shirt Chaipau takes out a small bottle of hair oil and a box of matches. As Solasaal watches wide-eyed, her back to the wall, Chaipau dowses the mattress with oil. Lights several matches at once and puts them on the mattress. It begins to go up in flames. Mesmerized they watch the flames for a couple of beats, then Chaipau grabs her hand, flings open the door and runs with her down the street yelling.

CHAIPAU: Fire! Fire! Rún!

32. KAMATHIPURA STREET—BROTHEL—DOWN 12TH LANE—EXTERIOR

There is panic. Chaipau and Solasaal run out of the door into the street. Behind them a voice shouts.

VOICE: Stop them! Stop them!

They run faster, but are soon caught by the bouncer. Panting and out of breath, the bouncer slaps Chaipau, then turns around and gives Solasaal an equally vicious slap across her face.

33. BROTHEL 109—INTERIOR—STUDIO

In the foyer of Brothel 109, Chaipau and Solasaal stand in the centre of a large and hostile crowd. Their faces are bruised and streaked with sweat. The Madame slaps Chaipau.

MADAME: You bastard! *(Slaps Solasaal)* And you! You bitch!

She grabs Solasaal's shoulders and shakes her, yelling. A hand comes down over the Madame's.

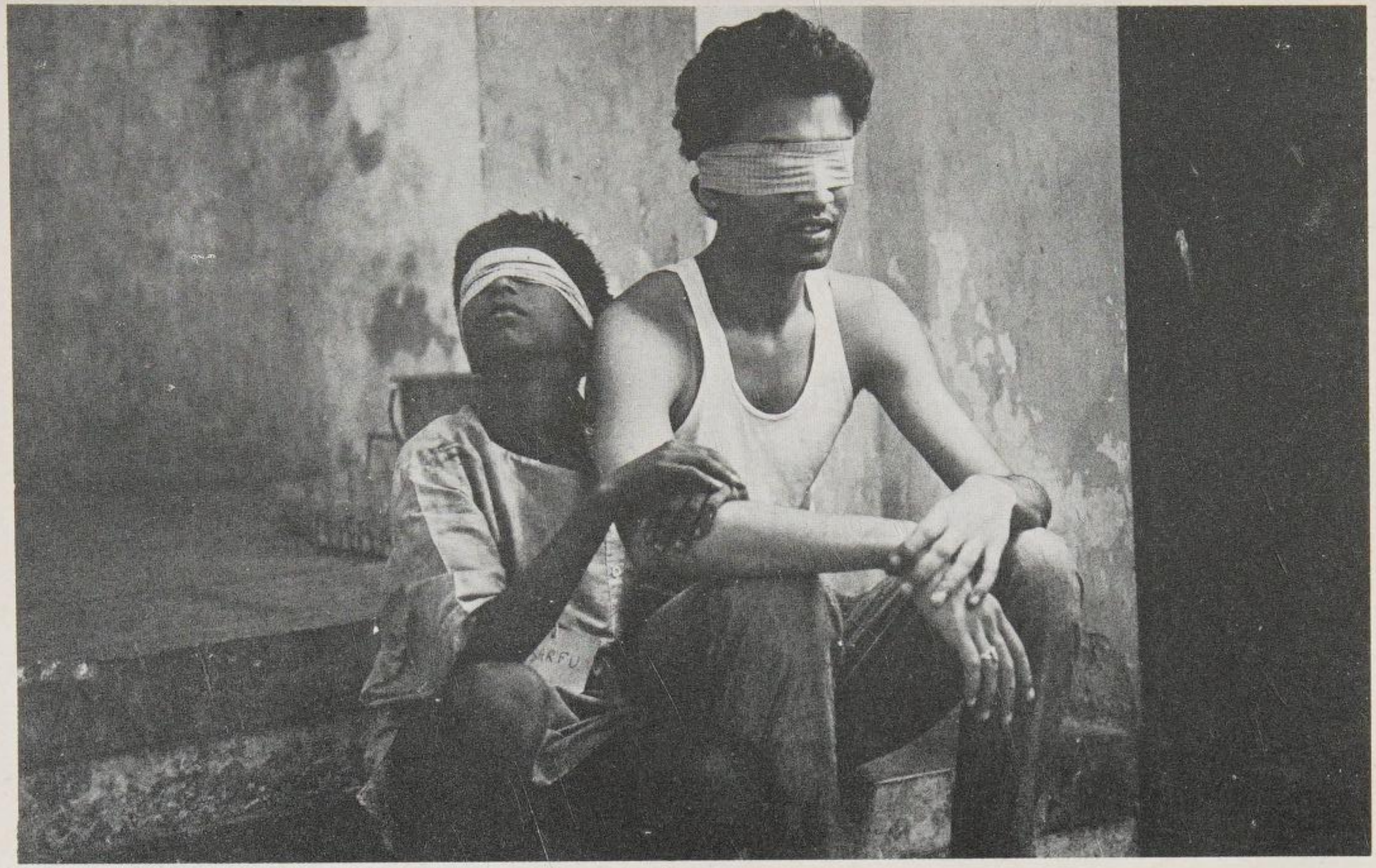
BABA: What's going on?

1. The *Salaam Bombay!* Workshop gang: Seated from left: Anuj, Silwa, Francis, Anjaan, Mumtaz, Yunus, Shekhar, Subhash, Manoj, Gautam; 2nd row: Anthony, Irfan, Ramesh, Mira, Hansa, Chanda, Shafiq, Subhash, Barry, Zafar; 3rd row: Tasleem, Tantaru, Babu, Raju, Dinaz, Dilip, Johnny, Raghubir, Sunil

2. Follow the leader (an exercise in mirroring) from left to right: Shafiq, Sarfu, Raju

3. Shafiq and Hansa rehearse the 'policeman scene' in the workshop

4. Ramesh and Silwa horse around at the workshop wrap party



5. Blind man's bluff: Sarfu and Irfan in a workshop exercise

6. Manoj, our sculptor, at Marve Beach

7. Shafiq and Hansa at Marve Beach

8. Baba takes Manju away from the gang of street-children sleeping at Grant Road (Scene 25)

9. Chaipau with Chillum's boots

10. Manju looks at Chaipau giving the chick to Solasaal (Scene 17)

11. Chaipau delivers tea (Scene 9)

12. Baba and Rekha (Scene 49)

13. Manju has an imaginary conversation with Chaipau (Scene 47)

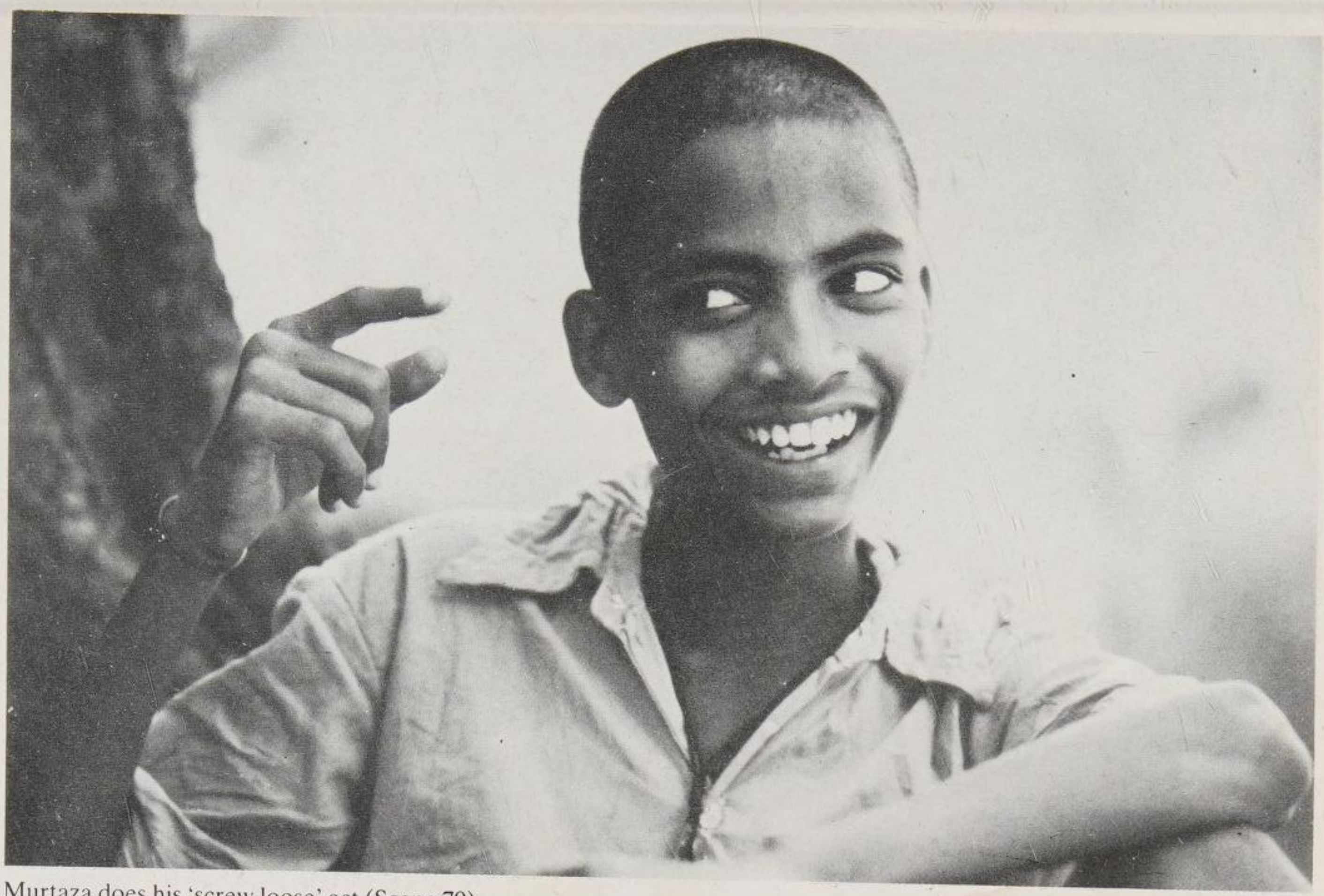
14. Madame watches as Baba comforts Solasaal (Scene 34)

15. Solasaal dressed for her first customer (Scene 90)

16. Rekha and Chaipau

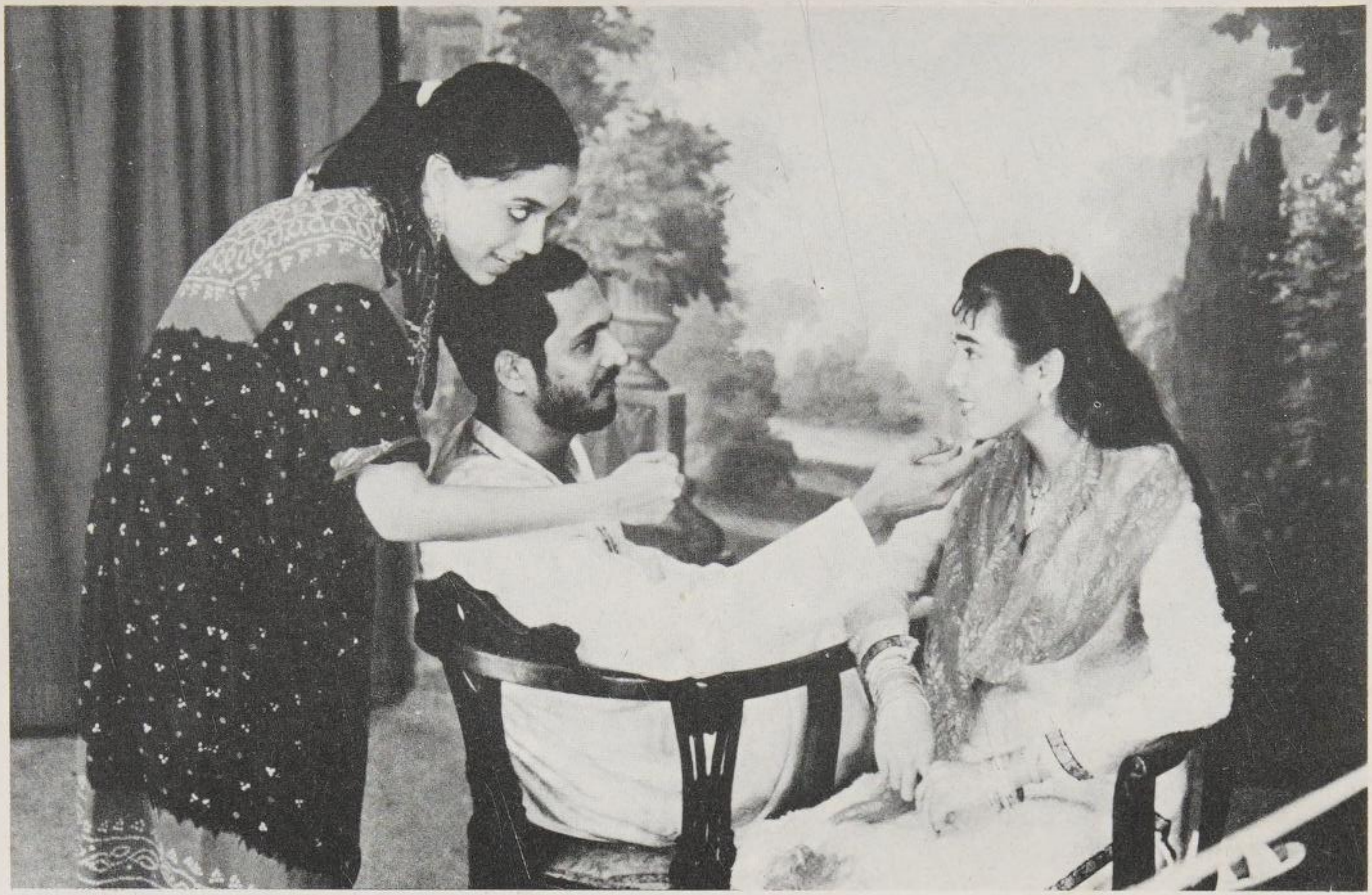
17. Krishna, Murtaza and Manoj in the Chiller Room

18 Koyla dances for an old Parsi (Scene 66)



19. Murtaza does his 'screw loose' act (Scene 79)

20. Chungal, Chaipau, Koyla and Salim working as waiters at a wedding (Scene 76)



21. Mira Nair directs Baba and Solasaal in the photo-shop (Scene 56)

22. Salim carries Keera after working at the wedding (Scene 77)

23. Salim, Chaipau, Koyla, Keera and Manju eating at the wedding (Scene 76)

24. Chaipau saves Chillum at Grant Road station (Scene 58)

25. Solasaal leaving with her first customer (Scene 91)

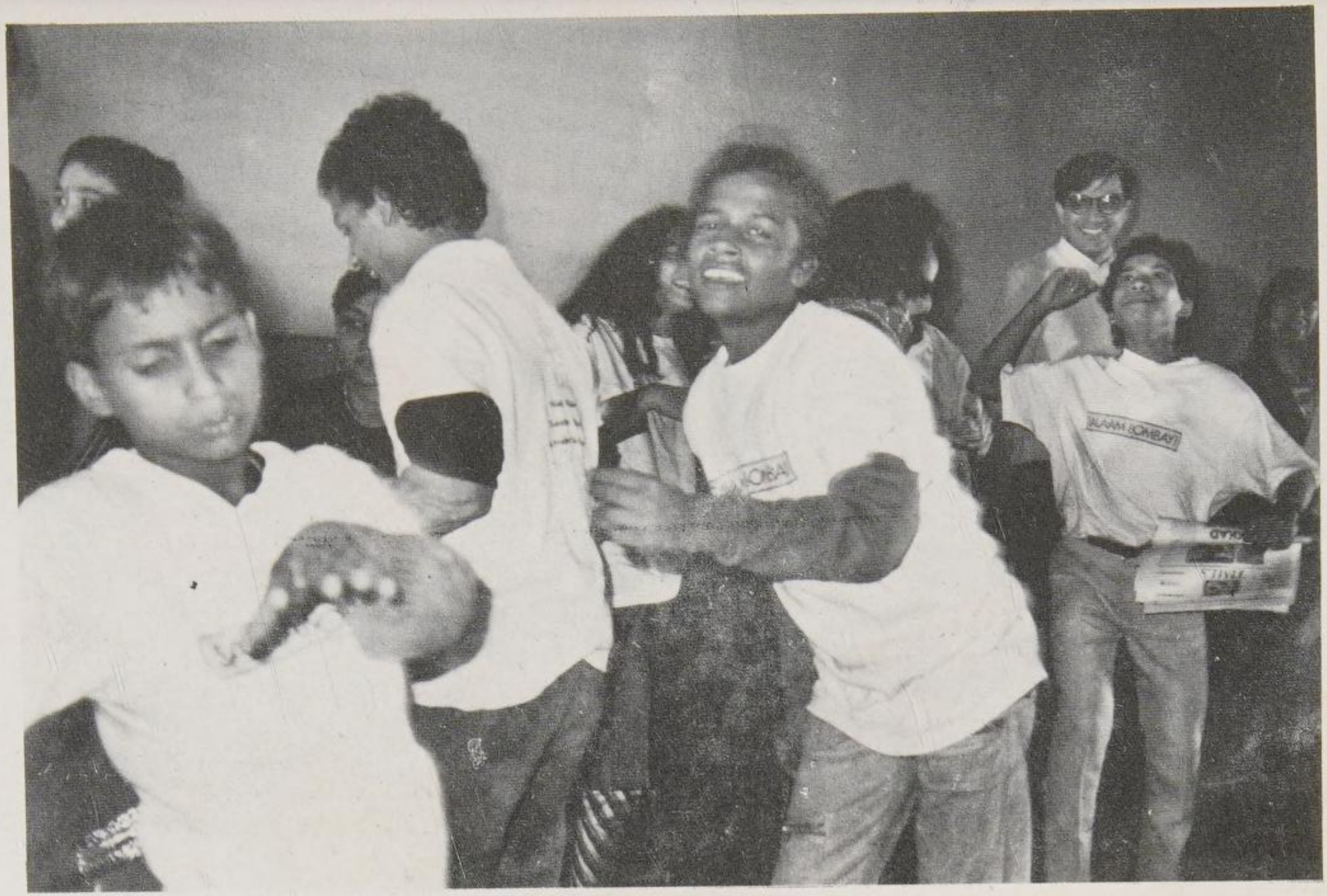
26. The Ganpati festival (Scene 93)

27. Rekha and Chaipau run through the Ganpati festival (Scene 93)

28. Some of the *Salaam Bombay!* film crew on the last day of shooting:From left: Murari, Radha, Sarfu, Shafiq, Mira, Sooni, Ramesh, Rashid, Nilita, Mitch, Joyce, Rana; Middle row: Nawab, Ajju, Humayun, Munna, Dinaz, Anjaan, Tanvir; Standing: Vikas, Juan, Shakir, Mahesh, Hassan, Imtiaz, Vangelis, Sandi, Nitin, Mohan, Neil, Amir, Syed, Tony

29. The *Salaam Bombay!* Tamasha Victoria: From left: Hansa, Babu, Ramesh, Anthony, Sarfu

30. Hansa at the Indian premiere of *Salaam Bombay!*



31. The *Salaam Bombay!* Children at the Indian premiere

32. The *Salaam Bombay!* children with Mira Nair: Standing from left: Babu, Sarfu, Rashid, Shafiq, Francis, Anthony; 2nd row: Raju, Mira, Silwa, Hansa, Shekhar

MADAME *(hysterically)*: What's going on? They planned it—he got her the matches, they set fire to my house—they were running away and the bouncer caught them. This fucking virgin has been nothing but trouble.

Baba turns the Nepali woman next to him to ask Solasaal about the incident.

BABA: What happened?

Solasaal breaks down. She sobs out incoherently in Nepali.

SOLASAAL: I wanted to die.

The Nepali woman translates Solasaal's words. The Madame reacts by slapping her again.

MADAME: Wanted to die, and take us all with you? So die and I'll have you stuffed with chillies!

BABA: For god's sake, she's only a child! Haven't you beaten her enough? Want this to become a police case?

He says something to Solasaal gently. Holding her by the shoulders, he leads her to the stairs. She walks up the stairs, Baba behind her. From Chaipau's point of view, we see Baba turn around and tell the Madame.

BABA: I'll take care of this.

The Madame follows Baba and Solasaal up.

34. SOLASAAL'S ROOM—INTERIOR —STUDIO

Baba makes Solasaal sit on the bed. Sits next to her, takes out his handkerchief, wipes her tears. Tenderly asks her.

BABA: Want some tea, some water?

Solasaal still sobbing, doesn't reply. Madame looks on angrily. Baba puts his arm around Solasaal's shoulder.

BABA: Don't you worry about a thing. Baba's here. I'll take care of you. I'll see nothing happens to you.

Solasaal doesn't understand, but the comfort of his voice makes her sobs subside.

MADAME: All these dramas I don't tolerate in my house.
BABA: You have no choice. Want her to try something again?
MADAME: You want a job? Tame her.
BABA: Stopped doing that, you know that.
MADAME: Give it a thought. She's worth ten thousand to me. One thousand to you after her first customer. Well ...

Baba doesn't reply, just looks at Solasaal.

35. BROTHEL 109 FOYER—ON KAMATHIPURA STREET—PAANWALLA AND STAIRS LANDING—DAY

The bouncer gives Chaipau a parting kick, pushing him onto the street. The camera follows Chaipau as he is kicked through the crowd. Chillum is at the periphery of the crowd, observing the scene.

BOUNCER: Ever see your face in here again I'll kill you!

[X] [Chillum leaves the crowd, puts his arm around Chaipau and walks him away.]

36. SCRIBE-SHOP—EXTERIOR—MORNING

Outside the General Postoffice are a number of open-air cubicles advertising typing, xerox and writing services. Chaipau sits in one of them, dictating a letter to a scribe in Hindi.

SCRIBE *(in the conventional, flowery, letter-writing format, reading out as he writes)*: Respected mother, How are you? I hope you are well as I am here. I did not run away. I was looking for *paanmasala* and they left without me. I am working in Chacha's tea-shop in Grant Road station. I think of home. *(To Chaipau)* OK. Continue.
CHAIPAU: I want to come back. When I have 500 rupees I will come home. They call me Chaipau here. No one calls me Krishna. Bombay is very nice. Do not worry about me. When I go to sleep I think of you . . .
SCRIBE: Ten lines finished. Fifty paise more if you continue.
CHAIPAU: I'm finished.
SCRIBE: Your respectful, devoted son—what's your name?
CHAIPAU: Krishna.
SCRIBE: Address? Mother's name?

CHAIPAU: Sita. In Chandanwadi, hut next to Bholaram, near the river, Dhule village.

SCRIBE: That's all?

CHAIPAU: Yes.

SCRIBE: What do you mean yes? What *taluka*, what state, *budhoo* (stupid)? There are twenty Dhules in India, how do you expect the postman to know which one your mother is in? *(He sees Chaipau's crestfallen face and softens a bit)* Do you remember the name of any village or town near Dhule?

CHAIPAU: Ambagaon is next to it.

SCRIBE: Anything else? No? OK. I'll write Dhule village, next to Ambagaon. OK?

Chaipau leaves. The scribe turns to a fellow scribe next to him.

SCRIBE: God knows where they come from, how they get here! Look at this address, waste of a stamp putting it in.

He crumples up the letter and throws it out on the street.

37. BARBER'S SHOP—SLEATER ROAD—RAINY MORNING

Chaipau runs into the barber-shop with his tea-crate and bangs down a glass of tea on the desk. He runs out immediately, eager to finish his rounds. The barber yells after him.

BARBER: Ay, there's too much water in my tea!

Chaipau, already running out, mutters angrily.

CHAIPAU: Too much water everywhere, not only in your bloody tea!

38. REKHA'S AND BABA'S ROOM—INTERIOR—MORNING

Chaipau enters Rekha's room, yelling 'Chaipau!' before he comes in. The atmosphere inside is cozy and languorous. The radio plays popular film music. Rekha reclines on the bed reading a newspaper, with Manju stretched out beside her. Manju's head rests on her mother's stomach as she watches the rain fall outside the window. From behind the newspaper, Rekha tells Chaipau.

REKHA: About time.

She looks up from the paper and sees a very drenched and cold Chaipau. She goes over to him, takes the glasses of tea from his hand, and makes him sit down on a chair. Chaipau is a little surprised.

REKHA: Off with your shirt.

Chaipau is first shocked, then shy.

REKHA: Come on, come on, take it off, don't worry boy, I've seen it all before. . . Manju, bring me those towels.

Chaipau removes his shirt, Rekha wraps one towel around his shoulders, and with the other she briskly dries his wet hair. She gets an empty glass, divides the two glasses of tea into three, hands one each to Manju and Chaipau. Then she hangs Chaipau's shirt on the chair to dry.

Manju perks up at this unexpected company. She sits opposite Chaipau while sipping her tea, watching him with a smile. Rekha goes back to reclining on the bed, the tea in one hand and a cigarette in the other. She turns the dial of the radio, tuning into hymns, then news, then a sitar *recital, and then a song from an old Indian film:* 'Mera naam Chin Chin Choo'. *Rekha laughs nostalgically.*

MANJU: Leave it, leave it there —I know that song!

She begins to sing with the radio in her child's voice. Rekha joins in. Manju stands on the bed and begins to dance. After a while Chaipau gets over his shyness and joins her. It's an old popular song that he knows too. The scene ends with all of them singing the last line of the song, shaking hands at the words: 'How do you do?'

39. OUTSIDE REKHA'S AND BABA'S BUILDING—SLEATER ROAD—EVENING

Music begins. Chaipau meets Chillum as he emerges from Rekha's building. Chillum grabs Chaipau by the neck, turns him around full circle, taking him towards Grant Road station.

40. GATEWAY OF INDIA—EXTERIOR—DUSK

[DS & I] *[Chillum and Chaipau follow a very large American—Neil.*

CHILLUM: Where is your Mummy-Daddy?
NEIL: New York.
CHILLUM *(shoving some hashish under Neil's nose)*: One puff taking, flying. Air-India!

Tempted, Neil takes it, sniffs it.

NEIL: How much?
CHILLUM: Two hundred and fifty.

Neil takes out a pocket-calculator and computes the cost in dollars.

NEIL: Too much.
CHILLUM: *No much!* For you Big Dog, *especial* price! One hundred fifty.

Neil takes out one hundred and fifty and gives it to Chillum.

NEIL: Why not? And give some to your little brother.]

41. MARINE LINES STREET—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

Chillum and Chaipau are out on the street. A ten-foot-high wall runs along the opposite side of the road. On the wall are painted advertisements for all sorts of products—Herbal Toothpaste, Brahmi Hair Oil, Pest Exterminators. In the middle of the wall is a small gate. Chillum and Chaipau cross the street, heading for the gate. They make way for a dead body carried on a stretcher covered with flowers. The men carrying it chant 'Ram ka naam satya hai' *(The Name of God is Truth) and the procession goes into the gate. Chaipau hesitates in front of the gate, not wanting to go in. Chillum laughs at him.*

CHILLUM: Don't be such a baby, come on!

42. GRAVEYARD—EXTERIOR

Chillum and Chaipau enter the gate and veer off to the right. There are no lights here, no people—only outlines of trees and graves all around them. The chanting of the procession is heard faintly in the distance.

CHILLUM: See *mundoo*, Muslim dead on the left, Hindu dead on the right.

They walk down a dark, silent path. The smoke from the crematorium ahead makes the atmosphere quite spooky. Chaipau walks behind Chillum, looking around fearfully. Suddenly he cannot see Chillum any more. He stands still, petrified.

CHAIPAU *(whispering frantically)*: Chillum! Chillum!

Silence. Suddenly, Chaipau feels a pair of hands around his neck. He screams. The hand clasps down on his mouth, muffling his cry. It's Chillum, who has crept up from behind. Chaipau is nearly in tears.

CHAIPAU: I don't want to go any further—let's leave—I'm going.
CHILLUM: Come on, *mundoo*, don't be such a baby. I'll hold your hand, OK? Here, let me hold your hand!

Reluctantly, Chaipau allows himself to be led. In the still of the night, Chillum begins to sing, almost in a monotone.

CHILLUM: Pistol—Packing—Mama, lay your pis-tol down!

He sings the same phrase over and over again as they walk. Hand in hand, the two of them reach the end of the path. In front of them is a clearing. They can see some trees, a hut and a darga. *Below the trees, a few shadowy figures sit on* charpoys. *The courtyard of the hut is lit with two petromax lights, projecting huge shadows. A group of men sit in a circle, smoking a* chillum, *laughing and talking. One man blows smoke into the face of a stoned cat. The men's voices mingle with the sound of cars and trains on the other side of the wall. Chaipau looks at this scene, amazed. Chillum creeps up behind the group and intercepts the* chillum *as it's being passed around.*

HASHIMBHAI: Eh Chillum! Where did you fall from?

Chillum, standing, pulls on the chillum.

HASHIMBHAI: How's the boss?

Chillum expels the smoke.

CHILLUM: That fucker? He's well, when is he not very well? A man who has no vices. . .

Chillum passes the chillum *to Chaipau who holds it like a veteran. Chaipau takes a deep drag.*

MAN IN CHAUFFEUR'S UNIFORM: A man with no vices is like a woman without breasts.

Chaipau expels the smoke spluttering. They all laugh at him.

HASHIMBHAI: Easy, easy, not so hard, big boy. Not your first time around.

Chillum takes out some money.

CHILLUM: Hashimbhai one ounce of your pure stuff. Introduce *mundoo* here to God's gift to the people. None of this Baba shit.
HASHIMBHAI (*giving him the hash*): You talk too much.

Chillum leads Chaipau away. Hashimbhai calls out to him.

HASHIMBHAI: Better stop doing all this *gard-fard*. Get back to the clean stuff.

43. BACK OF THE DARGA—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

Chillum leads Chaipau to the back of the darga. *He sits under a tree and makes preparations to chase brown sugar. Chaipau stands swaying looking at the sky.*

CHAIPAU: Eh Chillum, the sky is moving round and round.
CHILLUM: Ya, ya, come and sit before it falls on your head.

Chaipau weaves towards Chillum and sits down next to him. Chillum makes preparations to chase.

CHILLUM: They shouldn't see me doing this. *Gard* isn't holy, like hash. Don't ever try this I'm telling you—more deadly than poison. Sometimes I think—might as well drink Tik-20 and end it all.
CHAIPAU: Then why don't you just stop?
CHILLUM: Think it's that simple?

Pause. Chillum chases.

CHAIPAU: Chillum if someone told you, 'I'll give you anything you want,' what would you ask for?
CHILLUM: Bumpkin, dreams are only good for *matka* numbers.

They sit in silence for a while. The only sounds are the clip-clop of horses on the other side of the wall and the rustle of trees. Suddenly

Chaipau breaks into uncontrollable giggles.

CHILLUM: What's so funny man?
CHAIPAU: That fatso today.

Chillum laughs too.

CHILLUM: You were as green when you first came here! Remember VT?

Chaipau's giggles subside.

CHAIPAU: Chillum, when did you first come here?
CHILLUM: Forget it kid, you're talking ancient history. I don't even remember.
CHAIPAU: How can you not remember?
CHILLUM: I don't. Ran away from home when I was half your age. When I was that high I had already been around India three times by train, up and down, side to side: Bombay, Delhi, Kanyakumari, worked everywhere—saw all the Chiller Rooms.
CHAIPAU: Then?
CHILLUM: Then what? Liked Bombay's climate so settled down here—*hava pani* is good.

Lights two beedis*—gives one to Chaipau.*

CHILLUM: What about you? Think you'll go back to sweet village life?
CHAIPAU: I have to make 500 rupees. Then I'll go home.
CHILLUM: What's this 500, 500, business of yours?
CHAIPAU: Got any more stuff?
CHILLUM: Liked that huh? Better go slow or you'll go straight up.

Rolls him a joint. Chaipau drags on it and talks.

CHAIPAU: My brother—one day he lied to my mother—said I had stolen his money. He beat me up. He was always beating me up—after my father died he became a king. He was a mechanic. Used to bring home his customers' scooters to repair. One day I set fire to a customer's scooter...

Chillum laughs till he has to hold his side.

CHILLUM: Well done! Set fire to a scooter, then came here and tried

to set fire to 109! *Saala* and you look like butter wouldn't melt in your mouth! Then what happened?

CHAIPAU: She said I was very bad and she didn't want me at home. She took me to the circus and left me there. She said I couldn't come home till I made 500 rupees to give to my brother. In sixty days I'll have 500. Then I'll go home.

CHILLUM: You're a fool. Just forget them all. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends—nothing but trouble, who needs them? Cha! (*Spits*).

CHAIPAU: Me too? Aren't I not your friend?

CHILLUM: Chillum has no friends—had one once—learned a lesson. Never again. Now *dost mera dushman (tapping his pocket) aur dard mera dost* (Now friends are my enemies, and pain is my friend).

Silence.

CHAIPAU: Eh Chillum will you do one thing for me?

CHILLUM: Depends. What?

CHAIPAU: Will you go and see Solasaal?

Chillum turns on him angrily.

CHILLUM: What's wrong with you *saala*? Haven't you been beaten enough? Grow up kid! What did I just tell you, got to forget them all? Just do your work and mind your own business, otherwise...

CHAIPAU: Otherwise what? Chiller Room? What's this Chiller Room, Chiller Room, everyone goes on about?

CHILLUM: Want to know? No problem. I'll hand you over to a cop when we leave.

CHAIPAU: You'd never do that to me, you're my buddy Chillum, you've brought me to paradise.

Chillum lies on the ground, looks up at the sky and the stars and recites.

CHILLUM: *Agar Firdaus be-ruey zamin ast, Hamin asto hamin asto, hamin ast* (If there is paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this).

There is silence for a moment. Chillum looks at Chaipau who is fast asleep his head resting on Chillum's lap.

44. KAMATHIPURA PAANWALLA—EXTERIOR—DAY

Chaipau motions to Manju to come over from across the street, with a beseeching look on his face.

MANJU: What?

CHAIPAU: Please Manju, just one thing, will you give this to Solasaal for me?

He hands her the packet of biscuits and points towards Brothel 109. Manju shrugs, takes the biscuits and runs towards the brothel. The camera follows her as she enters the brothel, opening the packet of biscuits as she runs, looking back to see if Chaipau can see her. She stops at the foot of the stairs, stuffs all the biscuits into her mouth, and stands there chewing till they are finished. Then she crumples up the wrapper and throws it away, emerging onto the street wiping her mouth on her shirtsleeve.

Chaipau waits expectantly outside.

CHAIPAU: Gave them?

MANJU: Ya. *(She runs off towards her building.)*

45. BABA'S BALCONY—EXTERIOR—DAY

On the balcony, Baba is seated opposite an upper-middle-class young man, Sunil. Next to Sunil is seated a pretty, blonde woman. She has a notebook on her lap and writes furiously. Manju stands against the wall with her legs crossed, watching this scene with great interest.

BABA: Tell her the woman I live with was a prostitute. I rescued her, took her out from the street there (*he waves his hand towards Kamathipura*) brought her here. This is my daughter.

As Sunil translates into English, Baba calls Manju over. He ruffles her hair. Ignoring Sunil, Baba gives the woman a charming smile.

BABA: Tell her my actions speak louder than words, also tell her she's very beautiful.

SUNIL: Fuck off, I'm not telling her anything.

WOMAN: What did he say?

SUNIL (*in English*): He said let's have some tea (*to Baba in Hindi*) Ask for tea.

BABA (*yelling downstairs*): Chaipau, three teas!

He looks at Sunil, jerks his head towards the woman on her shoulder, and asks him.

BABA: Camera for sale?

SUNIL (*shortly*): No.

BABA: Want to buy a two-in-one?

Baba gets up and exits frame. Chaipau and Chillum climb stairs in the background. Chillum winks at Chaipau.

CHILLUM: *Ek aur gulabi bakra* (Another white sucker).

As Baba enters with the two-in-one, Chillum and Chaipau reach the balcony.

BABA: Ah, Chillum, prince of my kingdom.

Chillum takes two glasses from Chaipau. Chaipau exits with one glass towards Rekha's room. Chillum moves towards the ledge to put down the tea.

BABA: Not so fast, my friend. You and I are going to play a little game.

Chillum looks at him, the glasses in his hands. Baba smiles at the woman and takes out his belt, showing off for her. He begins to swing it slowly below Chillum's feet. Chillum sidesteps the belt. Gradually the swings get faster and more serious.

BABA: OK prince, jump!

The belt lashes Chillum's ankles. Chillum has to jump seriously now. He yells out in pain and jumps. Chaipau enters the frame, Rekha behind him. The glasses fall from Chillum's hand and break on the ground. Baba laughs. Chillum, humiliated and angry, looks at him with hate. The woman gets up, gives Baba a dirty look, takes her purse from the floor and walks out the door. Sunil follows. She is in a huff. She rapidly goes down the back passage. Sunil runs behind her.

Chaipau stands next to Rekha, looking uncomfortable.

BABA (*to Chaipau*): Get lost! What are you always hanging around here for?

Chaipau exits down the spiral stairs.
Chillum, enjoying Baba's humiliation and surprise, says with a wicked grin.

CHILLUM: Bird flew away?
BABA: Shut your mouth. Clean up this mess.

Chillum, still grinning, gets down on his hands and knees and picks up the broken pieces.

BABA: Smile now because you'll soon be crying, fucker.
CHILLUM (*standing up*): What did I do?
BABA : You're not in my employ anymore.
CHILLUM : Just because I smiled...
BABA : I don't like your face, that's enough...
CHILLUM : All the accounts are OK, so many years I've sold your stuff mixed with shit...
BABA : The accounts are not OK. I heard you sold half a *tola* of my stuff mixed with shit for 150 rupees? I didn't see that in your accounts. . .
CHILLUM: OK, so what? It was a mistake. I'll give you back the money...
BABA: You're finished, Chillum. That's it. It's over. Washed up. Go retire somewhere.
CHILLUM (*angry*): And what will you do? Find some other sucker and hook him onto drugs till he becomes your slave? (*Spits*) Everyone thinks you're a bloody hero. You can fool all of them but you can't...
BABA: Get out of my sight, Chillum.
CHILLUM: I'm going, I'm going. With the greatest of pleasure.

As Chillum leaves, Baba yells out.

BABA: Now do you know who Manju's father is, fucker?

Chillum furiously stomps down the stairs, giving Baba the finger.
[C] [*Baba enters the room, crosses it, past Manju playing on the floor. Rekha is at the door smoking a cigarette.*

REKHA: Bird flew away?

Baba walks past her to the front balcony. Rekha joins him.

REKHA (*laughs*): Sacked Chillum in front of your high-class friends—had fun?
BABA: Who the fuck are you to talk, standing here like a *Maharani* (Queen) sipping your tea...
REKHA : *Maharanis* have *Maharajahs*, not pimps dressed in *Rajah's*

costume. *Saala*, you live off my earnings and pretend to the world like you're my saviour! (*Mimicking him*) 'She *was* a prostitute. I rescued her.' Rescued me! (*laughs*) Baba—saviour of the whores!

Baba yanks her by the arm, pointing to the street.

BABA: I've given you a palace, go down there, ask any one of your kind if she'd like to change places with you. See what answer you get.

Rekha pries her arm away.

REKHA : Try your tricks with them Baba. Chillum and I stopped falling for them a long time ago.

BABA : Bloody ungrateful bitch. Who gives you *bhav* (status)? Who gave you Manju? Only respect you get is because you're Baba's woman, and you know that without me...

REKHA (*laughs*): *Saala*, hundred men could have given me Manju if I had wanted them to—and you leave her out of this. Damn good father you are to her—just use her to show off when you want to. (*Pause*) I was the Number One on this street when *I* chose *you*. Rich customers wanted to set me up and I refused. Think they're still not around?

She walks off into her room. Baba yells out.

BABA : Sure! They even wanted to marry you, right?

Manju follows her mother into the room.

MANJU : Ma—will you marry a rich man?

REKHA (*snaps at her*): Don't eat my head now, OK? Go down , play with Chaipau.]

Manju walks out to the balcony. Baba is still there, frowning and looking out on the street. Manju holds out her hands.

MANJU : Play with me?

Baba looks at her outstretched hands, moves towards her, picks her up, and in one strong gesture, swings her over the balcony. He deposits her on a narrow ledge outside, leaves her there and walks away. Manju, clinging to the wall like a monkey, yells out, crying for her mother. On the street the gang look at the scene with great amusement, watching Rekha as she rushes out. Rekha picks Manju up, cradles her in her arms and takes her into the room.

46. MALABAR HILL—STREET EXTERIOR—NIGHT

[X] [*See a taxi drive up to a quiet, exclusive, residential area.*]

47. RAVI'S PENTHOUSE—INTERIOR

Rekha's hand rings the doorbell. See Manju standing outside the polished wooden door, looking at it with wide eyes. Ravi opens the door—is surprised to see Manju. They enter the house. He closes the door.

RAVI : You brought her with you?

REKHA : Couldn't leave her at home today. (*To Manju*) Wait here for me and don't touch anything.

Ravi and Rekha disappear into his bedroom. Manju wanders around the apartment talking to herself, picking up various objects and examining them. Entranced by a music-box, she picks it up. The couple on it begin to turn to the Love Story *theme. Then she settles herself into a chair next to the phone, dials random numbers and has an imaginary conversation with Chaipau.*

[I] [MANJU: Chaipau—this is Manju—can you see them dancing? Look *(holds the music-box to the phone)* how nicely they're dancing. I'm in a very big room. Will you come to see me? When will you come?]

48. GOODS YARD—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

Chaipau searches for Chillum amongst the parked goods trains. Looks into them—then hears something and walks towards the noise. In the quiet yard, Chillum is flinging stones at the train — obsessively, like he's possessed.

CHAIPAU : What are you doing? Stop it, the *chowkidar* will come.

Chillum doesn't stop. He picks up a stone and throws it viciously against the side of the train.

CHILLUM : I'm going to kill that fucker. I'm going to kill him.

Chaipau scared about the racket he is making, grabs Chillum's arm as he is about to chuck a large rock.

CHAIPAU: You've gone mad or what?

Chillum turns on him angrily, collars him.

CHILLUM: He knew about the foreigner. How? Who told him?
CHAIPAU: Leave me *yaar*. I didn't do anything.
CHILLUM: Who squealed?
CHAIPAU: I didn't tell Baba anything. I just told Chungal how we got high that night and he asked where the money came from and I told him. I didn't know, you should have told me Chillum.

Chillum releases Chaipau, disgust on his face.

CHILLUM: Got any money?
CHAIPAU: No *yaar*.

Chillum picks up a stone.

CHAIPAU: Let's go to sleep Chillum.
Chaipau ducks as Chillum throws the stone at him.

CHILLUM: Leave me alone. Get out.

Chaipau, persistent, pulls him by the arm.

CHAIPAU: Come on Chillum, let's go.

Chillum shakes him off, walks down the platform kicking goods right and left. Chaipau follows him pleading.

CHAIPAU: Look we'll think of something in the morning. Let's go to sleep now.

Chillum turns and yells at him.

CHILLUM: I can't sleep fucker! I need some brown, leave me alone.
Chaipau keeps following him. Chillum climbs onto the roof of a train and walks the length of it. Chaipau on the platform walks alongside, looking up at him, trying to coax him to come down.

49. REKHA'S AND BABA'S ROOM—INTERIOR—NIGHT

Rekha is in her petticoat in front of the mirror. A bottle of beer and a half-empty glass is on the dressing table. Indian filmi disco music plays on Baba's shiny two-in-one boomblaster. The mood is jovial.

Manju wears Rekha's high heeled chappals *and struts around in them. Manju watches with amusement her mother's delight with her new nightie. Rekha then moves in front of the mirror, looking at herself from every possible angle. She begins to pose sexily at first, seriously sexy and then hams it up. She laughs at herself in the mirror, swaying in time to the music. Manju, ever ready to have a good time, imitates her mother.*
Baba's voice is heard heatedly talking to somebody on the landing outside.

BABA'S VOICE OUTSIDE: *Saala* cop—new specimen—increased his *hafta* (weekly bribe)—then he says, 'supply some women.' What does he think—that I'm some two-rupee tout?

Baba enters the room wearing a lungi. *He surveys the scene and remarks offhandedly.*

BABA: *Somebody's* in a good mood!

On hearing his voice, Manju snaps out of her dance and runs up to him. Rekha smiles at him and continues swaying. Baba glances at Rekha and then devotes all his attention to Manju who is eager to be heard.

MANJU: Baba, Baba, look what I have!

She proudly takes out the Mickey Mouse eraser and shows it to him.

MANJU (*holding it under his nose*): Smell! Smell!

They both sit on the bed. Baba takes it from her, looks at it, and is slightly cool.

BABA: Nice. Very nice.

Rekha sits on a chair in front of the mirror. She reclines with her feet up. Baba gets of the bed, turns off the music and slaps Manju on her bottom.

BABA: Out!
MANJU (*whining*): Ma said I could sleep here today!
BABA: Don't make me say it again...

Manju begins to cry.

MANJU: I want to sleep here, I want to sleep here, why can't I...
BABA: Manju if you don't get out you're getting a tight slap.

Rekha gently motions to Manju that it's best to leave the room. Manju leaves, dragging her feet. Her sobbing is heard from the balcony all through the rest of the scene.

BABA: Getting to be as stubborn as her mother.
REKHA: She's only a child.
BABA: Come, sit here.

He taps a place on the bed beside him. Without a great show of enthusiasm, Rekha lies down on the bed. Baba begins to undress.

REKHA: She could have slept here today...

Baba peels off his shirt.

BABA: You took Manju with you...
REKHA: Can't leave her here with madmen like you around.

Baba puts his shirt neatly on a chair.

BABA: Don't have any shame?

Rekha refuses to be provoked.

BABA: You didn't answer me.

Rekha remains silent.

BABA (*raises his voice*): Answer me! Teaching your daughter from now on to become like you!

Rekha smiles to herself. Baba slaps her.

REKHA (*screaming*): You fucking man, get out of my life. I wish I had never met you (*she hammers at him in a drunken rage*) get out—go...

Baba holds her hands as she resists.

BABA: What did I say that's so bad? All I said is I don't like you taking Manju with...
REKHA (*yelling*): And what about here? Think this is good for a child to see? So many promises—after she's born—a new life. Bloody liar!

BABA: Leave then. Who's stopping you?

Rekha looks at him with hate. Baba changes his tone, like he's speaking to a child.

BABA : Calm down Rekha, all that is past. Why bring up old stories now? Tell me, where did you go?

REKHA (*spits out*): Ravi's house.

She lies down, her back to Baba.

BABA : Nice?

Rekha, remains silent. Baba sits down on the bed and caresses Rekha's back, putting his hands under her nightie.

BABA : New maxi?

Rekha doesn't answer. He continues to caress her. She turns her back to Baba and shuts her eyes. Baba grabs her roughly and turns her around to face him, pinning back her shoulders to the bed. Rekha has to open her eyes. She looks at him with contempt.

BABA: Malabar Hill *sey vaapis aaii randi* (the whore comes back from Malabar Hill) got too big for Baba?

Under Baba's vice-like grip, Rekha is spread-eagled on the bed. He stares down at her. She meets his gaze. Their eyes are locked for a few moments. He pushes into her. The sound of Manju scratching on the glass doors outside is heard.

REKHA (*with disdain*): Just like a customer.

Furious and frustrated, Baba stares at her face. He abruptly gets off the bed, strides to the glass doors and flings them open. The glass doors hit Manju in the face, taking her aback. Behind her Chaipau stands scared. Baba shouts at the top of his voice.

BABA: Didn't I tell you to get out of here?

Manju cowers in the corner of the landing as Baba strides down-stairs. Chaipau and Manju enter the room. Rekha on the bed looks drunk, spent and exhausted. Manju climbs on the bed—curls up next to her mother.

CHAIPAU (*hesitantly*): *Didi*, Chillum's very sick, I need some money.

Rekha waves towards her purse.

REKHA: Take whatever you want.

She closes her eyes, her hand over them. Chaipau opens her purse which is stuffed with ten rupee notes. He takes two notes and then closes the purse.

CHAIPAU: *Didi*, I took twenty.

Without opening her eyes Rekha says.

REKHA: Fine!

Chaipau leaves.

50. REKHA'S AND BABA'S BALCONY—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

[X] [*On the balcony, Salim is waiting.*

SALIM: Got it?
CHAIPAU: Ya, twenty.
SALIM: Come on then.]

51. EMPTY BRIDGE—LATE NIGHT

CHAIPAU: I don't want to go this way. Chillum said at night all the ghosts of children who died come to this bridge.
SALIM: Come on fucker! You believe everything Chillum tells you?

Chaipau races across the bridge.

52. BROWN SUGAR DEN—NIGHT

Salim and Chaipau buy two vials of brown sugar.

53. GOODS YARD—INTERIOR—NIGHT

Salim and Chaipau part.

SALIM: Remember, if you tell him I came with you, I'll slit your throat. I don't encourage these bad habits, only this once.
CHAIPAU: I won't tell him I promise. Thanks Salim.

Chaipau runs into the goods yard. Gives Chillum the brown sugar. Chillum chases it, his hands shaking.

54. KAMATHIPURA STREET—EXTERIOR—DAY

Baba walks down the busy Kamathipura street returning greetings from women with a brief wave of the hand. He walks into 109. Within moments walks out with Solasaal by his side.

55. APSARA MOVIE THEATRE—EXTERIOR—RAIN—EARLY EVENING

[X] [*A long shot of crowds coming out of the movie theatre, flowing onto the street. A massive traffic jam in the rain. Baba and Solasaal come out on the street, look at the pouring rain, look at each other and smile. Baba shrugs and mimes sorrowfully—'No umbrella.' She begins to walk, getting wet.*
Baba follows, his hanky over his head, cursing the rain. They skip puddles, dodge people and traffic. The blaring horns make Solasaal put her hands to her ears as she walks. The rain does not let up. Baba motions Solasaal to wait with him in an open photo-shop.]

56. CHURCHGATE—PHOTO-SHOP—INTERIOR—EVENING

Baba and Solasaal stand in the shop looking out at the relentless rain. Baba looks around, sees a photo-booth, and motions to Solasaal to come with him. She follows him into the tiny photo-booth. Taking her by the shoulders, Baba makes Solasaal face the drawn curtains. She stares at them blankly as Baba stands behind her. The booth is tiny, and whichever way they stand, their bodies touch. The flash goes off, followed by a loud, wheezing sound. Solasaal is startled, then giggles. The flash goes off again. This time she laughs, turning around to look at Baba, who laughs with her. Baba kisses her as the flash goes off for the third time.

57. KAMATHIPURA STREET ALLEY—PAANWALLA STAIRS AND PINK ROOM—INTERIOR—EVENING

At the entrance of 109, Madame is waiting at the doorway. Solasaal runs up the stairs. Madame gives Baba a dirty look.

MADAME: Who gave you permission to take her out?

BABA: Look, you want her tamed. I do it my way. If you can't trust me then forget it.

MADAME: You work from the house. You know the rules. And if you've already screwed her—God help you. I don't cheat my customers. Virgin is what they want, virgin is what they get, understand?

Baba says nothing—walks out into the rain. From her window Solasaal watches with a smile as Baba walks down the street, with a sheet over his head.

58. GOODS YARD RAILWAY STATION—EXTERIOR—MORNING

[X] [*On the pavement, Chillum retches and pukes. Chaipau bends over him, his arm around Chillum, his crate of empty teaglasses on the floor next to him. The gang passes by with their empty sacks.*

CHAIPAU: Eh Salim, can you help me lift him?

SALIM: Fuck off, I don't get my clothes dirty for junkies. *Saala* why smoke so much if you can't handle it.

The gang walk off.]

Chillum stops retching. Chaipau, his arm around Chillum, manages to lift him, makes him rinse his mouth, then splashes water on his face. His crate of tea in one hand, he holds Chillum's hand with the other. Chaipau walks through the station to Chacha's. He returns the crate over the counter. Chacha looks at Chillum.

CHACHA: What's wrong with him?

Chaipau shrugs.

CHACHA: Why Chillum, smoking too much brown?

Shivering, Chillum doesn't answer.

CHAIPAU: Chacha, can you spare one tea?

Chacha gives him two teas. Chaipau walks Chillum to a bench close by. Chillum sits huddled. Chaipau holds the two glasses of tea.

CHAIPAU: Drink some, you'll feel better. Take a sip.

Chillum does not move. Chaipau holds the glass for a few seconds, then puts it down. He looks at Chillum and suddenly grabs him, slaps him hard.

CHAIPAU: What's this *yaar*, come on, stop it!

The shaking wakes up Chillum. He looks into Chaipau's eyes with panic.

CHILLUM: Got any money—I can't stand it—I need a smoke, please Chaipau—got any money?

Manju wanders by, sees Chaipau and Chillum and walks over. She stands looking at Chillum from a distance. Chillum sees her, and stumbles up. Thinking he's coming for her, Manju takes a few steps back. Chillum lurches forward, and with servility in his voice, says.

CHILLUM: Ask your ma for some money.

Manju, her eyes wide, looks at this new Chillum with amazement.

MANJU: She's gone out.

Chillum stumbles forward to the edge of the platform. A train is coming in. Chillum looks like he's going to walk over the edge when Chaipau races up from behind and grabs him. The train comes in. Commuters ascend and descend. In the middle of them, Chaipau holds Chillum who is crying.

CHILLUM: I want to die, I want to die—help me—I don't want to die, Chaipau...

Chaipau holds him tight, as they are pushed by the commuters.

CHAIPAU: Don't worry, we'll do something. You come home with me, we'll go to my village and then it will be OK. We'll make money fast then we'll go home—we'll go now and find some work, we'll leave this place, OK? Don't worry.

59. CRAWFORD SLAUGHTERHOUSE—CLEANING-SHOP—INTERIOR—MORNING

In a shop filled with hanging carcasses, the owner leads Chaipau, Chillum and Manju to the back and points at a pile of dead chickens on the floor.

OWNER: These have to be skinned, know how to?

Chaipau looks doubtful. Manju pipes up.

MANJU: Yes.

OWNER: Good. There are the knives—put the skin here. When you finish all these, I'll give you ten each—between three of you it's easy work.

The owner walks back to the front. Chaipau looks at the chickens with distaste. Manju picks one up.

MANJU: I'll show you. It's easy.

CHILLUM: Chaipau, go ask him to give some advance?

CHAIPAU: What?

CHILLUM: Ask him for some money now? Say I'm sick I need medicine.

CHAIPAU: No!

Chaipau and Manju get down to work. Chillum paces up and down and then goes up front, off camera, and asks the owner for an advance. The owner gets angry and kicks Chillum out of the shop.

60. HAJI ALI PATHWAY—EXTERIOR

[C] [*Chillum walks like a man possessed towards Haji Ali, a mosque floating in the ocean in downtown Bombay. A narrow pathway in the sea leads to the mosque from the street. It is lined with beggars and lepers. Chillum walks onto the pathway and sits on his haunches in a clearing between some beggars, his arms outstretched. The beggars turn on him angrily.*

BEGGAR: Eh *saala* , yes, you, move!

Chillum looks down at the ground. The beggar walks up to him, kicks his shins. Chillum falls over. The beggar hoists him to his feet, pushing him towards the mainland.

BEGGAR: Move, move! Where did you fall from? Think it's so simple?]

61. SLEATER ROAD FROM NANA CHOWK TOWARDS STATION—EXTERIOR—EARLY EVENING

Manju and Chaipau are exhausted. Manju smells her hands as they walk out of the station and makes a face. She holds them up for Chaipau to smell. Chaipau slaps her hands away. He is in no mood for fun. They approach the garbage dump where Chillum waits. As soon as he sees them, he springs up—new life in him. Manju walks off to her building.

CHILLUM: He paid you?

CHAIPAU: Ya, where did *you* disappear?

CHILLUM: Tried to make some money.

CHAIPAU (*resentfully*): Had a smoke?

CHILLUM: No *yaar*—where smoke, really I got nothing so I was waiting for you to come back. Give some, come on *mundoo*. . .

CHAIPAU (*furious*): No! It's the money to go home! Don't you want to leave? Come with me? *Saala*, fucker, Chillum, whole day we spent taking out those bloody skins and Chacha yelled because I missed a round and...

CHILLUM: I'm not asking for all of it. Just a little bit, rupee or two?

CHAIPAU: No!

Chillum starts crying.

CHILLUM: I was waiting for you to come back—we'll go to your home I swear but can't you give me just one rupee now?

Chillum spots Baba walking down the street, runs after him.

CHILLUM: Baba, please forgive me, Baba...

Baba says, without looking at Chillum.

BABA: Fuck off, Chillum.

CHILLUM: Please Baba one chance, I'll fall at your feet. Please Baba. . .

Baba turns around and pushes Chillum hard.

BABA: Didn't I tell you to fuck off?

Chillum falls on the street. Baba tosses him a few coins and then walks away. Chillum yells as loudly as he can.

CHILLUM: *Saala bhadwa*! (Bloody Pimp!)

Chaipau puts his arms around Chillum, helps him up and walks him away.

62. SOLASAAL'S ROOM—INTERIOR—EVENING

Baba enters Solasaal's room. She stands in the middle in her petticoat and blouse. A tailor with pins in his mouth makes adjustments to the choli. *Solasaal smiles with delight when she sees Baba. Madame grabs her shoulders.*

MADAME: Stand still. (*To the tailor*) Didn't I tell you to make it tight?

Tailor sputtering with pins in his mouth.

TAILOR: Madame, if I make it tighter, how will the poor girl breathe?

MADAME (*angry*): Your breath doesn't stop, does it? Just do as you're told. (*She stretches the blouse tight across Solasaal's breasts*) Fix the pin.

Baba stands by the window, his arms crossed, watching the scene scornfully.

MADAME: Take off the blouse.

As Solasaal takes it off, the tailor turns his back to her. She gives it to Madame and puts on her old blouse. The Madame gives it to the tailor who scurries out of the room. Madame follows him, throws over her shoulder to Baba.

MADAME: Your job's over, well done. Your money will reach you. Don't trouble yourself coming here again.

Baba does not reply. Madame gives him a look.

MADAME: And leave this door open.

As soon as Madame leaves, Solasaal with excitement shows Baba her new red silk sari.

BABA (*looking into her eyes*): So beautiful, so beautiful, so young, so innocent, like a rose in the gutter. When I have enough money I'll buy you, take you away from here, save you, wait for me. Will you wait for me? Will you?

He breaks off abruptly. Solasaal who doesn't understand what this is all about looks at him bewildered. Baba turns to leave, she follows him down the passage to the foyer. At the entrance she mimes—she wants to go with him, he shakes off her arm, tries to convey to her that she can't.

63. CHACHA'S TEA-STALL—EVENING

Chaipau runs up. When Chacha sees him he says angrily.

CHACHA: Where the hell were you? What do you think this is—a job or a charity? Where were you today?

CHAIPAU: I had some work. I told Keera to do my rounds.

CHACHA: You told Keera? And what about all the other times you've been late? And all the glasses you've broken, and all the trouble with 109? I told you from the beginning if you don't work well you're out. Lots more where you came from. Here's your money. Two hundred. I've cut fifty for all the trouble you've given me.

Chacha hands Chaipau his savings.

CHACHA: Don't come to work tomorrow. You're fired!

Chaipau walks away looking thoughtfully at his two hundred rupees.

64. STATION TRACKS—CHILLUM BRANCH AREA—NIGHT

At the State Bank Chillum Branch, Chaipau takes out the loose brick, puts his money in, then puts the brick back. Stands and stares at it. It is perfectly camouflaged.

65. GOODS YARD—EXTERIOR—DAY

CHUNGAL: Motherfuckers! These days they even guard the bloody garbage. What an age!

KOYLA: I told you, didn't I? Leave this bloody scrap business. Trains is best.

CHUNGAL: Shut up *yaar*. You're like a broken record.

Chaipau enters.

KOYLA: Eh Chaipau. Why such a long face?
CHAIPAU: Chacha fired me from my job.
SALIM: You guys want to do a job?
CHUNGAL: It depends—your jobs we all know about.
SALIM: NO GUTS NO GLORY! We're talking cash here, straight cash! Just say yes or no.

Chaipau looks at Chillum lying in a stupor across the tracks.

CHAIPAU: I'll do it.

66. PARSI HOME—INTERIOR—DAY

An old Parsi man, Daji, is seated on his armchair reading a newspaper. The door-bell rings. He doesn't hear it. The door-bell rings again and again. He raises his head, cleans his ears, then rises and walks slowly towards the main door. Chaipau, Manju and Keera are at the door.

CHAIPAU: You're looking for someone to bring your milk?
DAJI: Yes, yes. I need somebody to fetch my milk. Come in. What's your name, little girl?
MANJU: Manju.

Manju enters with Chaipau and Keera close behind.

DAJI: Do you go to school?
MANJU: Yes.
DAJI: And who are you?
KEERA: *Bhai - bhai* (Brothers).
DAJI: Sit down. I'll get you kids some thing to eat. Want a sweetie?

Manju nods yes. Daji walks off towards the bedroom. Chaipau realizing the danger follows him, yelling.

CHAIPAU: We don't want anything, sir! Don't want...

Daji enters the bedroom catching Salim, Koyla and Chungal by surprise. They are ransacking his room.

DAJI: Who are you? How did you get in? Vagabonds! Scoundrels!
KOYLA: Chungal, leave him to me.

Salim and Chungal taking Chaipau with them, run out of the

bedroom, leaving the old man under Koyla's care.

[Cut to] :

KEERA: I got to pee real bad!

[C*ut to*] :

[I] [*Koyla talking continuously, proceeds to tie up the old man.*

KOYLA: I'm Coalpiece of Grant Road. Trust me. I'll save you from these rascals! I've studied till fifth class—I even know English—Hello—Shut up—Get out—Cigarette—Silence!

The old man is stunned into silence. Suddenly, Koyla breaks out into a song-and-dance routine, leaving the old man completely baffled.

KOYLA (*sings*): My friend he's come from Bombay
Salute my friend from Bombay
In the city they drink all night
In the city they sleep all day.

Got that old man?

Koyla gives the old man a parting wiggle of his hips as the other kids yell out for him.]
The gang dash out of the house together and jump over the balcony wall.

67. GRANT ROAD PLATFORM—EXTERIOR

[I] [*Keera* sings Hava havai. . . *and pees on the tracks as a train comes in.*

VOICE: Ay boy, the train's coming!
KEERA (*buttoning his fly*): Let the father of the train come, I still won't move!]

68. GOODS YARD WALL—EXTERIOR

Chaipau runs up to Chillum Bank and carefully removes the brick and hides his money in the wall.

69. STREET—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

The gang are sitting in a horse drawn carriage having a great time.

They are drunk and happy. Koyla recites qawalis *and sings. Periodically he rings the bell that belonged to the old man.*

[I] [KOYLA: No peace without whisky.
Drink till you go bust!
Love till you drop dead!
If I can have Juliet,
Who cares about Romeo?
SALIM: Bravo! What poetry! One more! One more!
KOYLA: Your perfume lingers in my beard
My flower langours in your crotch!]
SALIM: Ay Chaipau ! How does this feel?
CHAIPAU: Great! If one is to live, life should be like this!
CHUNGAL: Ay bumpkin! Not missing your mother?

Chaipau lets out a big burp, then smiles drunkenly.

CHAIPAU: I am! I'm going home tomorrow!

Chaipau turns around and leaning out of the back of the carriage, throws up.

70. REKHA'S AND BABA'S LANDING—INTERIOR—BACK STAIRS

Late at night. Everyone is asleep. The street is quiet. Salim knocks on Baba's door with a great sense of urgency.

SALIM: Baba, Baba, Baba...

No answer. Salim bangs louder on the door.

SALIM : Baba, wake up, Baba, Baba...

The door opens and Baba comes out sleepy and angry.

BABA : What the fuck is it?
SALIM : Chillum, he's very sick...
BABA : *Saala*, are you waking me at two-thirty in the morning to tell me Chillum is sick? Are you mad? Gone off your head?
SALIM : His whole body is shaking and shivering. We don't know what to do. He's sweating, he's cold like ice, his eyes have gone into his head...

BABA : All that bastard needs is a fix.

He goes back into his room.

71. GOODS YARD—EXTERIOR—BISTARA—NIGHT

[X] [*Chaipau, Chungal, Keera and Koyla stand huddled in the circle. They part as Salim approaches. Chillum is in the centre of the circle, slumped on the ground, and still.*]

72. SLEATER ROAD—EXTERIOR—DAY

The street bustles with normal activity: traffic, pedestrians, hawkers, commuters. On the pavement, Chillum's body is bedecked with flowers. Chaipau sits vigil beside it. Exhausted and in shock, his face is numb with grief. Salim solicits donations for Chillum's funeral. Everyone gives willingly: Chacha, the paanwalla, *Gupta. Baba leans out from his balcony and calls to Salim.*

73. REKHA'S AND BABA'S BACK BALCONY—EXTERIOR—DAY

Salim looks at Baba resentfully. Baba takes out a twenty-rupee note and hands it to him.

BABA: *Saala* if we had known he was that sick we would have called the doctor. . .

Salim pockets the money silently.

BABA: What happened?

SALIM: He kept moaning—he smoked too much.

74. KAMATHIPURA AND NAGPADA—EXTERIOR—DAY

Chillum's body is covered with flowers on a stretcher carried by Chaipau, Salim, Koyla and Chungal. Other people from the street follow. They walk through Kamathipura. Solasaal watches from her window.

The funeral procession winds through the streets of the city, chanting Ram ka naam satya hai! *(The Name of God is Truth). The chant becomes a melancholy musical strain as the procession makes its way through the urbanscape of Bombay.*

75. GOODS YARD *BISTARA* AREA—EXTERIOR—EVENING

Chaipau, Koyla, Chungal and Salim are tired, subdued and still in shock. On the pavement nobody speaks. Salim viciously kicks a tin around, making as much noise as possible. Chungal and Koyla sit and look into space.Chaipau removes the loose brick from the wall and puts his hand in. He feels around frantically. Then he leaves the brick lying on the ground, goes to the pavement and goes through everyone's bistaras *like he is possessed. He shakes their belongings, throwing things around.*

SALIM: Oy, what do you think you're doing?

Chaipau turns on him, angry and disappointed, close to tears. He catches hold of Salim by the neck and begins to throttle him with all his strength.

CHAIPAU: You thief, my money, where's my money, you bastard, you thief, give me my money, my money to go home. . .

Salim chokes. He is rescued by Chungal and Koyla. Keera, who has been watching, says quietly.

KEERA: Chillum took it yesterday. I saw him. He smoked it all.

They all turn around towards Keera. Then Salim pushes Chaipau hard. He falls on the ground and Salim kicks him.

SALIM: Fucker, who are you calling a thief?

Chaipau is left writhing on the ground in pain, clutching his stomach. Amidst the legs of pedestrians coming and going, Chaipau is curled up like a foetus, crying.

CHAIPAU: I want to go home . . . I want to go home. . .

76. MAHALAXMI TEMPLE WEDDING TENT—INTERIOR—NIGHT

A wedding band—with a crooner standing on a float built in the shape of a huge pink budding lotus, belting out an Indian movie song. They are surrounded by coolies carrying glass chandeliers lit with gas flames.The band play inside a tent where a wedding has just taken place. At one end of the cavernous space sit the newly-married

couple, bedecked with flowers, receiving people. Other guests sit around sipping fruit-juice and talking. Their children run around, screaming and playing catch.

A child bumps into a waiter and knocks over the tray of drinks he carries. The waiter is Salim, dressed in faded livery, with Purohit Caterer embroidered over his pocket. His waiter's pants are too large for him and fall in crumpled folds around his ankles. His hands are encased in dirty white gloves.

The kid who has caused the mess on the floor is a pudgy seven-year-old with glasses. Salim cuffs him on the ear. The kid runs to find his mother. He runs across the room, winding his way through the guests, and talks to her, pointing his finger in Salim's direction. Salim joins Chungal, Koyla and Chaipau at the back of the tent, in an open-air space covered with tarpaulin—the caterer's kitchen area. Large pots of food cook on wood fires, crates of bottled drinks are stacked up to one side. Manju and Keera wash dishes.

[I] [MANJU: Hey evil eye, keep washing those glasses!
KEERA: I'm washing them, why are you bugging me?]

There is much commotion outside in the tent where dinner is being served on long tables. Lines of boys walk the length of the table serving different dishes onto gleaming thalis. *Chaipau serves* samosas. *For every five* samosas *he serves, he stuffs one into his shirt as inconspicuously as possible.*

The wedding over, the boys sit on the floor in the kitchen area eating fast and with absolute concentration, cramming as much food as they can into their mouths. A man walks around, handing each boy a twenty-rupee note.

[I] [SALIM: Ay Chaipau, pass the food.
CHUNGAL: Now's your chance. Eat all you can.
SALIM: No tips for us?
MAN: Got this much, be grateful.
KOYLA: Twenty rupees for so much work? Think we are beggars? (*Examines the note*) Looks torn to me. Guess it'll do.]

Chaipau receives his salary. He carefully folds the note and puts it in his pocket. Manju leans across and quietly gives him her twenty rupees.

77. BYCULLA FLYOVER—EXTERIOR—DAWN

Salim, Keera, Koyla, Chungal, Chaipau and Manju walk back from the wedding. It is the time between night and morning. The street lamps are still on. They pass a few people sleeping on the pavement. On the street a milkman rides past on his bicycle singing, his milk-cans jangling from the handlebars, his dhoti *flying in the breeze. The gang is sleepy, tired and satiated. Their shirts are stuffed with food, forming a tyre around their middles. They slowly walk up the steep incline of the deserted flyover.*

KOYLA (*groaning*): Oh god, oh god, my stomach is bursting!

CHUNGAL: *Saala*, you packed in enough for two weeks! Salim, did you see how much he ate?

KOYLA: As if you didn't!

SALIM: Not like you *saala*! Do you have a stomach or a high court building inside you?

Chaipau is walking along, hiccuping. Manju walks beside him, her eyes half-closed with sleep.

KOYLA: Eh Salim, you shouldn't have hit that kid, *saala*, there could have been trouble. Bloody acting like a hero! With rich kids you can't win.

SALIM: Come on, forget it, *yaar*. I'm not scared of any fucking body.

They reach the middle of the flyover. On the other side we see the headlights of a vehicle as it approaches the bottom of the flyover and continues towards the gang. Salim notices it first, then Koyla. They both turn around and take off. Chungal follows them, hissing over his shoulder to a nonplussed Chaipau.

CHUNGAL: Cops! Come on!

Chaipau runs, following Chungal. Then he remembers Manju, and looks over his shoulder and yells.

CHAIPAU: Come on, come on!

Manju looks at Chaipau's panicked face as she runs towards him. She trips over a drain and falls down. Chaipau runs back for her, roughly picks her up, sets her up on her feet, holds her hand and half-drags her at a run. The others have disappeared. The headlights of

the approaching van lights up their frightened faces as it makes a screeching turn. A voice from inside yells 'Stop!' Chaipau and Manju freeze, still holding hands.
A uniformed policeman with a large stomach walks out of the van holding his stick menacingly. He walks up to the kids, looks down at them as they look up at him.

COP: What are you doing on the streets this time of the night?
CHAIPAU: We were going home, we were working at a wedding. It just got over. . .

The cop pokes his stick at Chaipau's shirt pocket.

COP: What's in there?

Chaipau swallows, the voice cracking.

CHAIPAU: My money to go home.
COP: Money to go home? That's a good one.

The cop shoves the stick into Chaipau's chest.

COP: Come on, come on, take it out.

Chaipau takes out the money. The cop takes it from him, counts it, and puts it in his pocket.

CHAIPAU (*nearly crying*): It's my salary—if you don't believe me you can. . .

The cop slaps him hard twice. Chaipau reels.

COP: Enough of your stories. Think I was born yesterday?
CHAIPAU: It's the truth. I'm telling the truth. . .

The cop grabs Chaipau and Manju by the shoulders. They are pushed into the back of the van. He closes the back door and gets into the front seat. The driver turns on the engine, the cop beside him lights a cigarette and yawns.

78. VAN—INTERIOR—EARLY MORNING

In the back of the van, the windows are barred. Two sleepy drunkards in handcuffs fall over each other as the van bumps along. Chaipau and Manju sit opposite them. Chaipau sits with his head on

his lap. His face is hidden. Manju, her face impassive, has her arm around him. One of the men lurches towards Chaipau. With his handcuffed hand outstretched, he pats Chaipau's head.

HANDCUFFED MAN: Everything will be OK, not to worry.

It is light outside. Uniformed schoolchildren walk carrying their satchels. Chaipau watches as they cross the road in a line. Taxi drivers asleep on their taxis—white uniforms against black.
The city is waking up. In a moment, the van stops. Instinctively, Chaipau and Manju's hands reach for each other. The front door opens, footsteps come around to the back. The back door opens, and the cop signals to Chaipau to step out. Chaipau emerges, fear in his eyes, his face tear-stained. He doesn't let go of Manju's hand. The cop roughly separates them, pushes Manju into the van and slams the door shut. Manju looks through the bars at Chaipau being escorted across a busy street. He turns around to look at her. The cop prods him forward. Chaipau enters a building with high walls. It looks like a jail. A sign outside reads: Remand Home for Boys.

79. CHILLER ROOM—EARLY MORNING

In the early morning light, the camera dollies down a long corridor. A distant sound of chanting comes closer and closer. The corridor leads to a large courtyard encircled by high walls. The sound is deafening. Two hundred boys with close-cropped hair stand to attention holding a slip of paper across their chests. They are shouting out their daily prayer: Tumhi ho mata pita tumhi ho. *Chaipau is pushed into the frame. He joins the boys, looking around. Holding his slip of paper across the chest, he tries to mouth the words of this prayer which he does not know. He is surrounded by boys of all ages—some of them taller, others much younger than him. They check out the new arrival with their eyes, still shouting the prayer. The prayer ends, and the enforced discipline gives way to complete bedlam. The supervisor retreats, leaving the boys to their own devices. Chaipau stands in the middle of a circle of boys. He is interrogated by a couple of boys older than him. A small crowd of other boys are vicarious spectators.*

LALUA: What's your name?

CHAIPAU: Krishna.
LALUA: What did you do?
CHAIPAU: What's it to you?
LALUA: Don't act smart. Just answer the question.
CHAIPAU: I didn't do anything.
LALUA: Bloody liar.
CHAIPAU (*enraged*): Don't call me a liar!

He lunges for the older boy. They have a serious scuffle. Chaipau manages to kick him in the balls. The older boy groans and writhes on the floor. Chaipau, who has surprised even himself, walks away as nonchalantly as he can. No one stops him. He sits against the wall and observes his surroundings.

Amidst the chaos, boys go about their daily routine. Some sweep the gravel paths, others stir large vats of food. In one corner, a man yells out names and numbers. A group of boys gather around him. They are made to sit in a line, on their haunches, their heads between their knees. As Chaipau tries to figure out what is going on, a scrawny kid with a large head, huge eyes and flapping ears walks over and sits next to him. His name is Murtaza.

MURTAZA: They're going to court. Show me your card.

He takes it from Chaipau's hand, looks at it, shakes his head sorrowfully, and hands it back to Chaipau.

CHAIPAU: What? What's written on it?
MURTAZA: Your date, not for six months, relax, you got lots of time. My name is Murtaza. I saw you beat up that Lalua *chor*, they won't bother you again, and it's a good thing that you did. They trouble me a lot. And I'm not even new. I can show you everything here. Any questions, you ask me. In five years I've seen everything.

Chaipau remains silent. He looks at the card in his hand, then at Murtaza, who grins at him.

CHAIPAU: You've been inside for five years?
MURTAZA: Sure. Lots of other boys too.

Chaipau is horrified.

CHAIPAU: But I didn't do anything! They can't keep me here if I didn't do anything!

MURTAZA (*cheerfully*): That doesn't matter. That's got nothing to do with it. That guy with the long arms was pissing on the street, three years ago. I didn't do anything, if I did I've forgotten what I did, it was so long ago. Everyone's forgotten us, you know. (*Pause*) Can you teach me to kick like you did?

A boy runs by, waving a wet shirt, laughing. He is followed by a bare-chested boy who runs after him crying.

CRYING BOY: Give it back! Give it back!

MURTAZA (*puts his finger to his temple*): That guy—'screw loose'—whole day he spends washing his clothes. Waits for them to dry, washes them again, lots of screws get loose in here—will you teach me that kick? (*He gets up*) Was it like this? (*He kicks the air*).

Chaipau gets up. Murtaza keeps kicking the air.

MURTAZA: Am I doing it right?

From the courtyard of the Chiller Room, the sound of a loud bell is heard. From the gate a stream of visitors enter. Chaipau and Murtaza sit against a wall, watching Parents' Day unfold. The camera moves over the wall to the girls' section of the Remand Home.

80. REMAND HOME—GIRLS' SECTION—INTERIOR

Rekha and Baba hand Jaggu a chit. He reads Manju's name out aloud—camera follows as he walks through girls' section. The camera follows him as he goes to the second floor. The faint sound of cricket commentary is heard on the radio. Jaggu crosses a courtyard where younger children play. On the other side sit a group of fourteen to sixteen-year-old Nepali girls combing their hair. He goes up the stairs, passes a group of infants sitting on their plastic potties. Some of them nod asleep as they sit, their feet dangling. Other children cry and are being put to sleep by nurses. Jaggu goes into a room filled with six to eight-year-old girls and boys. He asks an older kid who Manju is. She stands by the window staring out. He motions for her to follow him.

In a large room, filled with girls and their visitors, Manju enters. She looks subdued and different; her hair is neatly oiled and tied and the

dress she wears is too big for her. Rekha sits next to her, holding her hands. Baba sits on the other side. Manju is quiet, almost not acknowledging their presence. With a flourish, Baba takes her plastic hammer from his bag and holds it out to her. Manju does not move.

REKHA: Are you well? Say something Manju, how are you my love? I miss you so much.

BABA: All your friends have been asking me—where's that rascal Manju?

REKHA (*with forced cheerfulness*): Look at this dress you're wearing!

BABA (*holding out his hands*): Want to play?

Manju remains silent and unmoving. The bell rings again to indicate visiting time is over. Rekha hugs her tight whispering to her.

REKHA: Don't be scared my love. We'll come again to see you—you'll be home soon.

From Manju's point of view, we see Rekha and Baba leave. Rekha looks back at Manju, worried, her heart breaking at leaving her.

81. OUTSIDE ASHA SADAN AND ACROSS FROM LUCKY STAR—EXTERIOR—DAY

On the street outside, Rekha and Baba cross a small procession of people chanting, reverently carrying a small statue of Lord Ganesh (Remover of Obstacles) into the Remand Home. Baba stops to pay obeisance. Rekha walks on. He catches up with her.

82. IRANI CAFE, LUCKY STAR—INTERIOR

[X] [*Baba and Rekha sit at a small, round marble table. Rekha stares at the street blankly. Baba is as subdued as Rekha. The waiter approaches. Baba holds up two fingers.*

BABA: Special.

They sit in silence. The waiter returns with two special teas.

BABA (*to Rekha*): Will you have biscuits?

Rekha shakes her head no. Baba pours his tea into the saucer, blows

on it to cool. He looks at Rekha who hasn't touched her tea. Baba puts down his saucer and leans towards her.

BABA: Drink your tea.

Rekha's eyes are wet. Baba holds her hands.

BABA: Drink your tea. Starving yourself is not going to help Manju—she'll be out soon—after all she hasn't done anything! Have faith—what is this?

Rekha roughly wipes her eyes and drinks her tea.

BABA: We have each other at least.

Rekha looks at him wanly, her expression suggesting: what does that amount to?]

83. CHILLER ROOM COURTYARD—DAY

In one corner of the courtyard, the adults in the Chiller Room pray to a statue of Ganesh. Surrounded by a few boys, they sing bhajans. *On the other side, under a tree, over a wood-fire, Chaipau and another boy stir a huge pot of boiling* dal *(lentils). Murtaza comes up, kicking the air.*

MURTAZA: Eh Chaipau, Chaipau, am I doing it right?

Chaipau ignores him. The other boy shoos away Murtaza like he's a dog.

BOY: Bloody nut.

[X] [Murtaza walks away, does a kick, walks some more. Lalua Chor catches hold of him.

LALUA CHOR: Eh retard—what's written on my card?

He shoves it under his nose. Murtaza swallows, looks down at it. He swallows again.

MURTAZA: Next month.

Lalua slaps him hard.

LALUA CHOR: Liar. They told me six months. Where did you read one month? Show me!

MURTAZA (*crying*): If I tell you the truth, you beat me up, if I lie to you, you beat me up—why did you ask me if you knew?

Lalua Chor slaps him again.

LALUA CHOR: Don't cry like a baby.]

He walks away, leaving Murtaza crying. He walks to a corner and sits alone. Chaipau, stirring the dal *mechanically, has been watching the scene. He sees Lalua Chor and a friend go over to Murtaza again and give him a kick.*

CHAIPAU: Why do they trouble him so much?

The boy shrugs.

CHAIPAU: It's not his fault what's written on the cards.

BOY (*shrugs*): Got to take it out somewhere.

In the distance, Murtaza dodges his tormentors, running away from them as fast as he can. He runs towards the tree, circles it, then grabs hold of Chaipau from behind. Lalua strolls up.

LALUA CHOR: Get out from behind there, *saala*—again hiding like a baby.

CHAIPAU: Why don't you just leave him alone?

Lalua is silent for a few moments. No one speaks. Murtaza clings to Chaipau like a monkey.

LALUA CHOR: Been here only two weeks and talking like a *dada*? (*He pushes Chaipau*) Think every time it's going to work—your tricks? (*He pushes Chaipau again*) I give everybody one chance, not two.

Lalua grabs Chaipau by the neck and shoves his face into the steaming dal. *Chaipau screams with pain.*

84. CHILLER ROOM COURTYARD—DAY

[C] [*Two hundred boys, scrubbed clean, stand to attention in the courtyard. The Superintendent addresses them. Beside him stands a TV crew: two men and a woman.*

SUPERINTENDENT: So we welcome them here with us today. Don't be scared to tell the truth, but remember no lies. (*He laughs*) And no *mirch masala*! (tall tales).

Close-ups of three boys' faces as they speak into the camera.

BOY # 1: My name is Narayan Ramchander Mutter. In my village I had a friend who used to live in Bombay. He said to me—*Yaar, Bumbai chull* (Pal, let's go to Bombay)—there we'll make money, eat well, live in peace. So I said *chull* (Let's go.)

BOY # 2: I was working in a tea-shop. Where I live there is a Boss man. When the dada got caught for something, he gave them my name. They came to get me, beat me, put me inside here. (*Pause*) I'm not going to admit any guilt because I haven't done anything.

BOY # 3: Nobody knows I'm here. My family, nobody. I'm here two years now. Everybody's forgotten me.

A close-up of Chaipau's face. His cheek is scarred from the burn. He looks into the camera and remains silent.
A sympathetic female voice is heard off-camera.

WOMAN: What happened to you?

Chaipau remains silent.

WOMAN: What's your name ?
CHAIPAU: Krishna.
WOMAN: How did you come here, Krishna ?
CHAIPAU: To the Chiller Room? (*Shrugs*) They stole my money and put me here.(*Angrily*) What did I do ? None of these boys—none of us have done anything so bad that they have to shut us up like this! In this fucking city if you steal you're called a thief, if you don't steal you're called a thief and all the big people—what happens to them? (*Pause*) I hate it here, I wish I had never come. Bombay is like a prison, you can come in but you can't get out.
WOMAN: If you could get out where would you go ?

Chaipau shrugs.

WOMAN: Home?
CHAIPAU: Once I wanted to go. . .
WOMAN: And now ?
CHAIPAU: Now? Now I'm in prison, what's the use of dreaming?
WOMAN: But if your dreams were to come true what would. . .
CHAIPAU (*angry*): Dreams are only good for *matka* numbers.

The Superintendent' s voice cuts in laughing while the camera is still on Chaipau' s face.

SUPERINTENDENT'S VOICE: Sorry, time is up, you'll have to stop now—don't listen to him—biggest troublemaker and liar we have here.

Chaipau and the boys watch as the Superintendent leads the TV crew out. Chaipau is surrounded by an admiring crowd of boys shaking his hand and thumping him on the back. Their glee is short-lived. The Superintendent walks back frowning. From the boys' point of view, we see him collar Chaipau, cursing.

SUPERINTENDENT: Bloody *bukbuk*master! (Bloody blabber-mouth!)

He slaps Chaipau hard. The boys watch with awe as Chaipau is dragged away, resisting with all his might. The camera follows Chaipau as the Superintendent shoves him into a cell and locks the door.]

85. MRS. JOSHI'S OFFICE—INTERIOR

Mrs. Joshi sits behind her desk, the nameplate in front of her showing that she is the Chairperson of the remand institution. She is an older, frail woman with a whispery voice.
[C] [Manju is led into the office by Jaggu. Her hair is brushed back into a tight ponytail. Like before, she looks well-scrubbed and subdued. She does not show any emotion, neither surprise nor joy , on seeing her mother. Rekha, who cannot control her happiness on seeing her, kneels on the floor and hugs her tight, rocking to and fro, whispering into her ear.

REKHA: *Meri jaan, meri jaan* (My heart, my heart). . .

Manju stands stiff in her mother' s embrace. Rekha holds Manju' s face as she looks at her.

REKHA: My darling, I miss you so much—how are you? Are you well? Say something, Manju. . .

Manju' s eyes, so cold before, begins to well up with tears. She puts her small arms around her mother and clings to her, crying hysterically. Rekha comforts her.

REKHA: I'll come again to see you, you'll be home soon—stop crying, my love. . .

Mrs. Joshi rings the bell on her table, ting, ting, ting, asking for Jaggu. Jaggu comes in. She motions to him to take Manju away. He extricates her from Rekha gently. Manju resists with force.

REKHA: Can't she stay a little more time?

MRS. JOSHI: Jaggu!

Jaggu manages to take a kicking Manju out of the room. He hurries down the corridor with her. Rekha shouts out to her.

REKHA: Manju, I'll come back soon!]

Rekha goes back to Mrs. Joshi' s office and stands in front of her desk. Mrs. Joshi motions her to have a seat. Rekha continues standing.

REKHA: When can I take her home?

MRS. JOSHI: Please sit down.

Rekha sits at the edge of the chair. Mrs. Joshi clears her throat. Then she begins to speak, softly and slowly.

MRS. JOSHI: Often children don't know what is good for them—but we as adults must see to it that they get the best. Isn't that so? Very often we have children here whose parents beat them every day and still the children cling to the parents crying when they. . .

REKHA: Manju was never beaten. What are you trying to say?

MRS. JOSHI *(trying to calm her down)*: I'm not saying you beat your daughter. I'm just giving you an example. Now Manju for instance. She does not speak *(pause)* why?

REKHA: She doesn't like it here. She wants to come home. She was perfectly fine when she was at home.

MRS. JOSHI: Yet she doesn't speak. Now *you* say she was speaking before she came here—but how can we be sure of that? You see (*pause*) children of mothers in your circumstances—but all that is irrelevant now. Your file just came to my desk today, let me see where it is. . .

She shuffles through a pile of papers, takes a file out, opens it and puts on her reading glasses and reads out aloud.

MRS. JOSHI: The state desires that due to your declared position as a woman of immoral repute, the state should look after the child's development for the present. The child can choose to go back to you when she is an adult, that is eighteen years. Of course you can appeal . . . But why not let the child be adopted into a good family, it will be

easier for you also.

REKHA: You can't do this, she's the only one I have, nobody else, nobody. . .

86. BOMBAY STREET—EXTERIOR—MIDDAY

Rekha walks down a busy street, past knots of people listening to the cricket commentary on radios. Her eyes are tormented. She walks on, oblivious to the activity around her.

87. CHILLER ROOM RECREATION ROOM IN COURTYARD—LATE AFTERNOON.

[DF] [*Image of a TV screen fills the frame. The scene is of Sunil Gavaskar hitting a sixer. The crowd roars. The camera follows the ball as it makes its way towards the boundary. A fielder runs towards the ball with his arms outstretched and catches the ball before it reaches the ground. A loud groan from the crowd as the umpire signals that Gavaskar is out. With his bat under his arm, Gavaskar walks back to the pavilion.*

[CUT TO]:

Remand home and the crowd watch the cricket match on television. The Superintendent and his staff sit on chairs, the chowkidars *leaning on their sticks by the door, their eyes on the screen, and behind them a crowd of boys—some interested in the match, others occupied in different ways—some hurl themselves on each other in friendly fights, others sleep, others jump around. The Superintendent slouches on the chair, holding his own private transistor glued to his ear, his feet stretched out lazily in front of him. His foot shakes compulsively. He cannot hear the commentary over the din of the boys playing around and waves to a fat man behind.*

SUPERINTENDENT (*referring to Gavaskar*): *Saala* , what bad luck!

FAT MAN ON CHAIR: He deserved it. Acts too smart—only thinks of himself and never thinks of the team. All he knows is how to ha-ha-ha-ha in Colgate toothpowder ads! Go, go, Sunny, go brush your teeth!

SUPERINTENDENT *(to the fat man)*: Shut up, will you? I can't hear

the commentary!

The fat man gets up and bellows to the populace.

FAT MAN: Shut up!

The fat man raps two boys on the head and lumbers over to his seat. For a while there is some silence but then the noise takes over again. Now the adults are engrossed in the match and nobody takes notice. Chaipau sits in a corner by himself, hugging his knees and staring into space. Murtaza approaches, kicking the air. He sits down next to Chaipau.

MURTAZA: Am I doing it right?

Chaipau doesn't answer.

MURTAZA: Every night I dream that I escape. *Fatak, fatak*—I give kicks right and left—anyone comes—*fatak*—nobody can stop me—everyone's scared of me—*fatak, fatak. . .*

CHAIPAU: Keep dreaming.

MURTAZA: Eh Krishna, want to try?

CHAIPAU: Get lost, *mundoo.*

MURTAZA: I'm serious.

CHAIPAU: You're mad!

MURTAZA: Listen to me. Look around. *(He sees everybody preoccupied with the cricket match, their eyes glued to the TV set)* Now's the time. I know how.

It dawns on Chaipau that Murtaza is serious.

MURTAZA: Just follow me. . .

Chaipau surveys the scene: the Superintendent and his family, the staff and the chowkidars *all cheering the Indian side to try harder. Chaipau gets up. He and Murtaza walk across the courtyard and slip through a door. They climb five flights of stairs quickly to the top. In front of them is a locked door with a window next to it. Murtaza climbs on the banisters, puts his hand through the top window which is open and unlatches the lower window. They both jump in through the window, closing it behind them. They are in the Superintendent's residential quarters now. Murtaza knows the lay of the land. He heads straight to a window in the kitchen.*

MURTAZA: From this one.

CHAIPAU: You're mad? It's too high!

Murtaza opens the window and looks down, looks at Chaipau with a grin on his face.

MURTAZA: It's there. Lucky. Doesn't usually come on Mondays—look!

Chaipau looks down. He then looks at Murtaza with an admiring smile, slapping his hand.

CHAIPAU: Let's go. . .

Chaipau climbs out of the window and scales down a thirty foot long drainpipe until he reaches a narrow ledge. He looks up at the window and loudly whispers

CHAIPAU: Come on, *mundoo*!

Murtaza has disappeared. The window is shut. Chaipau looks down at the mountain of fresh garbage, pauses, then jumps. The garbage cushions his fall. He picks himself up and runs.]

88. BOMBAY STREETS—EXTERIOR—AFTERNOON

Chaipau races through the city streets. Subramaniam's violin merges with the sounds of city traffic, hawkers and vendors; the cricket commentary is heard from the radio everywhere.

89. GOODS YARD—CHILLUM BRANCH AREA—EXTERIOR—DAY

Chaipau races to the dump, there is nobody around. Chaipau hurriedly takes the loose brick out of the wall and extracts his top. A voice behind him says.

KID: Ay, what are you doing?

CHAIPAU: That's mine. Left it here. Who are you?

The scrawny kid, about fifteen years old, says aggressively.

KID: CHILLUM 2.

Chaipau looks him up and down.

CHAIPAU: The boys around?

CHILLUM 2: Gone on a trash round. . .

CHAIPAU: Work for Baba?

CHILLUM 2: Ya.

CHAIPAU: Sell his drugs?

CHILLUM 2: Ya.

CHAIPAU: Smoke it too?

CHILLUM 2: What's it to you? What business is it. . .

Chaipau runs through Ganpati festival preparations in Kamathipura.

90. KAMATHIPURA STREET—INTERIOR—DAY

Close-up of Solasaal's trinketed hands playing solitaire on the bed. Chaipau knocks and then enters. Solasaal, her face made up, wearing her new red sari *with flowers in her hair turns around expectantly. Her face first shows disappointment, then a faint smile when she realizes it is Chaipau. Chaipau stands with his hands knotted together behind his back, nervous and shy and then he bursts out.*

CHAIPAU: I'm, leaving. Want to come with me, Solasaal?

She turns. This is the first time she has heard his voice. She mimes—'What did you say?' He mimes—'You and I, open the door, walk down the steps, up the street, into a train'—he points out the window and mimes—'Far, far away.' Solasaal is still for a moment. From under her mattress, she takes out a picture. She holds it out for Chaipau to see. Chaipau takes it. It is the picture of Baba and Solasaal, taken in the photo-booth. He gives it back to her. They both hear Madame's voice outside the door. Chaipau scrambles under the bed. The door opens. From Chaipau's point of view under the bed, see the feet of Madame and a man enter the room. Hear their voices.

MADAME *(in a sugary tone):* Look at her. *(To Solasaal)* Turn around, my dear. *(To customer)* Isn't she an innocent bud? I've saved her carefully—especially for you!

See the man's feet walk towards Solasaal. Man's voice cracking with excitement.

MAN: Beautiful, beautiful.

MADAME (*sweetly*): Come on, my dear!

Chaipau sees their feet walk out of the room. He scrambles out from under the bed, runs down the stairs. He sees Solasaal getting into the front seat of a green Ambassador. A fat, greasy man holds the door open for her. He gets into the driver's seat, the car begins to move. Chaipau runs alongside the Ambassador as it inches it's way along the busy street.

91. STREET—EXTERIOR

Solasaal her face blank, looks out of the window. The car turns into Sleater Road. Suddenly Solasaal's expression changes. She leans out of the window and looks back—at Baba who is standing on the street. Baba sees her too. The green Ambassador picks up speed and drives away. Baba stares at it till it's out of sight. Chaipau looks at him with hate. Baba, his shoulders slumped, goes towards his building.

92. REKHA'S AND BABA'S ROOM—INTERIOR

In the room Rekha is flinging clothes into a trunk. Baba stops short in surprise.

BABA: Going somewhere?

Rekha doesn't answer—continues with her packing.

BABA: Where are you going?

REKHA: I'm leaving. Manju's gone. I'm going too. No reason for me to stay.

BABA: Hey, hey, what is this? Manju's gone but I'm still here! What about me?

REKHA: You? You go to your Solasaal!

Baba goes over to her, hugs her—she viciously shrugs him away. Baba in a very conciliatory tone.

BABA: That's all finished. That was work. Don't go. I need you Rekha. Don't leave me and go.

Rekha hauls the trunk from the bed. Baba stands in front of her pleading.

BABA: Should I have refused the job? But if you say drop it, I'll drop it. Tired of working? Happens sometimes. Put your bag away. I'll take you out. Now tell me where would you like to go?

REKHA: Get out of my way Baba.

She walks out of the room, Baba at her heels. He walks in front of her blocking her way.

BABA: Where will you go? Where will you live? Bombay's public is dangerous. They'll eat you up. Here you have a home, you only said it was bad for Manju to grow up here. We'll get her back—start again—promise—Baba's promise.

REKHA: Too late—heard too many of your promises. Get out of my way.

BABA (*angrily*): Oh ho—get out of my way? The whore's going to become a saint? Think it's that easy to put the filth behind you? Going to swim in the Ganga and become Mother India?

They're at the stairs. Rekha at the top of the stairs, Baba two steps below her.

REKHA (*controlling her voice*): I don't want any trouble—just let me go, Baba.

Baba takes out his knife and slaps it into her hand.

BABA: Otherwise what? Want to kill me? Here kill me! Take this, my Meena Kumari! Finish me off! Kill me!

REKHA: Fuck off!

Rekha throws the knife away. It falls over the banister and lands at Chaipau's feet. Chaipau looks at it—hesitates—sounds of yelling are heard on the stairs. Chaipau in one swift movement picks up the knife, races up the stairs to where Rekha and Baba are struggling—pushes the knife into Baba's back. Baba slumps forward—shock and betrayal in his eyes.

BABA *(groaning)*: What did you do. . .What did you do?

Rekha begins to scream hysterically. Chaipau clamps his hand over her mouth, grabs her hand pulling her, yelling.

CHAIPAU: Run!

93. BOMBAY STREETS—EXTERIOR—TWILIGHT

[DF] [Waves of people are chanting and dancing, carrying statues of Ganesh. Chaipau and Rekha, hand in hand, are jostled through the crowd as they run. Chaipau feels his top drop out of his pantspocket. Despite the onrush of people, he gets on his hands and knees and begins to try and look for it. He gets almost trampled in the process. Rekha yanks his arm and is then separated from Chaipau by a rush of people. Chaipau loses sight of Rekha. He tries to get out of the procession but is swept along with it to the Chowpatty beach. We see a panoramic shot of the waves of people moving towards the sea, celebrating the immersion of the statues of Ganpati in the ocean.]

94. BOMBAY STREET—EXTERIOR—NIGHT

[DF] [Late at night Chaipau walks down a deserted road. Through bleary, exhausted and numb eyes, he sees headlights approaching. He ducks into the landing of a building. The vehicle passes by with a wave of noise—a truckful of Ganpati revelers going home. Then the street is quiet again. Thoroughly exhausted, Chaipau looks around. On the opposite side of the road, under a bridge, he sees a row of people sleeping, covered with ragged sheets. Chaipau crosses the road. A dog comes up and sniffs him, then curls up on the ground, next to the people. Chaipau lies down next to them. Within moments he is asleep. A hand covers him with a torn sheet. The camera zooms out very slowly to reveal his sleeping figure enveloped by the city of Bombay.]

The End

Notations and Additional Scenes

1. Scene 1: [DF] (Opening scene) Scene from film attached.
2. Scene 6: [I] (Sarfu directs traffic) One day during the workshop, Dinaz Stafford came across Sarfu standing on top of a road-divider opposite Metro Cinema. He was directing traffic and had attracted a crowd of amused spectators. She came back and told us about it. When we began shooting, Mira remembered this incident and put it into the film.
3. Scene 8: [I] A visual transition to introduce Rekha and to establish that Krishna is now called Chaipau.
4. Scene 10: [I] A visual transition to establish who Chillum is.
5. Scene 19: [DS] (Kids at the movie) Original scene from script attached.
6. Scene 40: [DS & I] (Chillum sells drugs to the foreigner) As soon as we saw Neil—our Boom Man—we put him in the scene. He was a good sport and did a marvellous job in the short time we had to shoot this scene. Original scene from script attached.
7. Scene 47: [I] (Manju talks to Chaipau on the telephone) Hansa wasn't feeling well that day—her part of the scene was shot late at night. She was barely awake but took our breath away when she improvised her telephone conversation.
8. Scene 66: [I] (The robbery) This scene had been in the script from the beginning. But the tenor of it changed completely when we decided to let Sarfu do his thing. The morning we shot it, we asked him what he could do—he showed us. Dinshaw Daji and he rehearsed for a few minutes and when we shot it, all of us had a hard time trying not to laugh.
9. Scene 67: [I] (Raju peeing on the train tracks) Mira discovered Raju could pee on cue and that became his motif in the film.
10. Scene 69: [I] (Gang celebrates) Sarfu's obscene verses were his own. The night we shot, he had drunk some beer and was in full form.

11. Scene 76: [I] (Wedding scene) When we shot Raju and Hansa—she took him completely by surprise when she came up with her line—'*Eh panoti*' (evil eye). When the gang receive their money—Sarfu once again demonstrated his scene-stealing abilities and his natural sense of timing when he waited for everyone to stop talking—then lifted the twenty-rupee note, checked it and said, 'Look's torn to me but I guess it'll do.'

12. Scene 83: [X] (Chaipau hurt by Lalua Chor in Chiller Room) When we shot this scene, Ramesh who plays Murtaza threw a tantrum because he thought he had been insulted by someone. Since time was running out, Nilu, the Assistant Director, came up with the solution to cut this scene in the middle.

13. Scene 87: [DF] (Chaipau escapes from Chiller Room) Scene from film attached.

14. Scene 93: [DF] (Chaipau and Rekha are separated) Scene from film attached.

15. Scene 94: [DF] (Last Scene) The last scene was shot on the second last day of the shoot. We could not afford another night shoot and Sandi, the DP, made a relevant point that the film's story really gets over when Chaipau and Rekha are separated. The scene as it is in the film was thought up by Sandi, Mira and Sooni. It is one instance of a visual scene that cannot adequately be translated into words. Scene from film attached.

ADDITIONAL SCENES

1. FAIR-GROUND—EXTERIOR—EVENING
[DF] SCENE FROM THE FILM

[The circus is packing up, getting ready to travel to a new location. Against a country landscape, workers bustle around loading various items. The cages clang shut. Boards advertising Apollo Circus are carried away, women pack their trunks, an elephant waits to be led away. An eleven-year-old boy, Krishna, walks across the frame carrying a heavy bundle on his back. He stops to talk to a bear in its cage.

KRISHNA: Hey Moti, ready to leave?

He stops to look at a couple of dogs in a cage. Another boy runs up

to him.

KID: Krishna, Krishna, the boss is coming!

The two boys rush back to work. Krishna stops to watch as the Main Tent folds up. The canvas billows down around the central pole. A man's hand descends on Krishna's ear.

MELABOSS: Who the hell's going to work—your father? (*The melaboss hands Krishna some money.)* Run into town, get me three tins of Ganesh *paanmasala*. Make sure it's Ganesh. Get it—and fast!

Krishna runs the other way, towards the long, deserted road to town.]

19. MOVIE THEATRE—INTERIOR
[DS] SCENE AS WRITTEN IN SCRIPT

[Images from the movie fill the frame. The heroine is being debased by a rich landlord. She dances for him, tears of shame in her eyes. The lecherous old man makes an advance and she shrinks from his touch. The hero bursts in. Before he can begin his passionate tirade against his father, defending the heroine's honour, Koyla takes up the dialogue, loudly proclaiming the hero's dialogue seconds before he says them.

The crowd around looks at the boys. An irritated man sitting behind them raps Koyla on the head and tells him to shut up. Shot of the gang chuckling and shaking hands with Kaliya in glee.

Cut to a romantic scene between the hero and heroine. Salim, Koyla and Chungal, bored, sceptically dissect the heroine's looks. Chaipau is thoroughly engrossed.

The couple's romance is interrupted by the landord's Hit Man. A dishum-dishum *fight scene ensues. The gang is now alert and sit on the edge of their seats. The fight is followed by the climax of the movie. In chorus, the gang yell the hero's words loudly. The audience, very agitated with the boys now, yell at them to shut up. Commotion in the balcony. The usher comes in and shines his flashlight on the boys' faces. The climax of the movie goes on at high pitch, unregarded. Salim turns around at their irritated neighbour and says rudely.*

SALIM: Eh fuck off. We paid our eight rupees in full—we'll do what we like!]

40. GATEWAY OF INDIA—EXTERIOR—DUSK
[DS] SCENE AS WRITTEN IN SCRIPT

[At the Gateway of India. A beautiful evening—the Taj Mahal hotel glimmers, many people stroll about, tourists come on and off sight-seeing boats, vendors and hawkers. Chaipau and Chillum pass by the portico of the Taj Hotel, press their noses against the window of the Patisserie. They see an iced cake in the shape of a ship which says 'Happy Birthday Chimpoo'. Some foreigners are about, almost all of them being pestered by other urchins relentlessly offering a huge variety of drugs. Pulling Chaipau with him, Chillum joins their chorus. Nobody buys.

Winking at Chaipau, he spots a young couple on the other side and runs over to them. The girl is attractive, dressed in cheap Indian clothes and Birkenstock sandals. Her bespectacled companion wears a striped button-down shirt and chinos. Chillum with Chaipau walks a few paces behind them and starts to sing.

CHILLUM: You are my *sangshine*—my only *sangshine*—you make me *auppy*—when skies a *balloe*. . .

The girl begins to be charmed, but keeps walking.

CHILLUM: *You newair notiss—how much I lowe you—plees don't take my sangshine awaay!*

He hops in front of them.

CHILLUM: Which country? Francais? Spikinzee Doytch?

JEFF: Excuse us. . .

CHRISSIE: America.

CHILLUM: America? *Besht* country! Liking India, sister?

CHRISSIE (*laughing*): Sure!

CHILLUM: Buy some hashish? Very good. *Besht* Afghani.

Offers them a little to smell. Jeff puts up his hand to wave them away.

CHILLUM: Free to look, sister—no money taking. One puff taking—flying! Air-India!

Chillum mimes a plane. The girl looks at the package as it swings towards her nose. She smells the stuff.

JEFF: We're not interested. Come on.

Jeff walks past the two boys, almost pushing them out of the way while looking straight ahead.

CHRISSIE: Real Afghani? Amazing!

CHILLUM (*to Chaipau, in Hindi*): Baba *ispecial*. Mixed with shit. *(To the girl)* For you, *ispecial* price, sister.

JEFF *(furiously returns)*: Chrissie, what are you doing?

CHRISSIE: How much?

She looks at Jeff, smiling but determined.

CHILLUM: Just 250 rupees!

CHRISSIE: How much is that?

JEFF: Too much.

CHILLUM: *Besht* Afghani. *Besht* money. How much you pay?

JEFF (*takes a breath and stalls for a moment*): Hundred rupees.

Chillum looks at Jeff without moving or showing any sign of emotion. The suspense is too much for Chaipau.

CHAIPAU *(to Chillum in Hindi):* Sisterfucker, take it.

CHILLUM: 150 rupees.

Chaipau thinks Chillum has blown the deal. Meanwhile Jeff takes out a pocket-calculator and begins to compute the cost in dollars. Chrissie looks over his shoulder at the figures.

CHRISSIE: Wow, just twelve bucks? Let's go for it!

Jeff looks around paranoid, as if the cops are behind them—fumbles with Indian money, makes sure he's got it right, and hands it over quickly to Chillum. Chillum takes the money, hands them the stuff, as if he's giving them a great deal. Jeff and Chrissie move on. Chillum winks at Chaipau, who looks back at him in incredulous admiration. Then Chillum faces their retreating backs, and standing like a voluble opera singer, begins to belt out.

CHILLUM: Goodnight, Aiirene,—goodnight—Irene goodnight! Goodnight, Irene, goodnight, Irene—I'll see you in my *durreams*! *Chillum offers Chaipau his palm; they slap each other nines, triumphant.]*

87. CHILLER ROOM RECREATION ROOM IN COURTYARD—LATE AFTERNOON (CONTD.) [DF] SCENE FROM THE FILM

[Chaipau and Murtaza survey the scene: the Superintendent, the staff and the chowkidars *are all cheering the Indian side. Chaipau and Murtaza get up. They run through the Chiller Room grounds, reaching the ladder leading to the water-tank. It is covered with barbed wire. Chaipau climbs it first, with Murtaza close behind. Chaipau helps Murtaza to get up to the water-tank.*

MURTAZA: From there!

CHAIPAU: So far away!

Chaipau and Murtaza slide onto the roof-top. Murtaza tells Chaipau to jump on to the thirty-foot-wall to look for the garbage truck.

MURTAZA: Check out our good luck—go see!

Chaipau clinging on to the barbed fence looks down.

CHAIPAU: Nothing here!

Murtaza points to another side of the wall.

MURTAZA: Look that side!

Chaipau scales across the wall holding onto the barbed wire. He looks down the other side.

CHAIPAU: Come quickly!

Murtaza has disappeared. Chaipau looks down at the mountain of fresh garbage, pauses; then jumps. The garbage cushions his fall. He picks himself up and runs.]

93. BOMBAY STREETS—EXTERIOR—EVENING

[DF] SCENE FROM THE FILM

[Waves of people are chanting and dancing, carrying statues of Ganesh. Chaipau and Rekha, hand in hand, are jostled through the crowd as they run. He gets almost trampled in the process. Rekha yanks his arm and is then separated from Chaipau by a rush of people. Chaipau loses sight of Rekha. They scream for each other. The street is filled with thousands of people celebrating the Ganpati festival.]

94. BOMBAY STREET—EXTERIOR—TWILIGHT

[DF] SCENE FROM THE FILM

[The shot dissolves to Chaipqu sitting in front of a building. He reaches into his pocket for his top and slowly begins to wind the string around it. Tears roll down his face. He quietens down and slowly looks up.]

The End

Credits

THE CAST

In Order of Appearance

KRISHNA/CHAIPAU	Shafiq Syed
KID AT CIRCUS	Anjaan
MELABOSS	Amrit Patel
TICKET-SELLER	Murari Sharma
MADMAN	Ram Moorti
KOYLA	Sarfuddin Qurrassi
KEERA	Raju Barnad
CHILLUM	Raghubir Yadav
REKHA	Aneeta Kanwar
BABA	Nana Patekar
CHACHA	Irshad Hashmi
MANJU	Hansa Vithal
SALIM	Mohanraj Babu
CHUNGAL	Chandrashekhar Naidu
NEPALI MIDDLEMAN	Kishan Thapa
SOLASAAL	Chanda Sharma
MADAME	Shaukat Kaifi Azmi
BOUNCER	Haneef Zahoor
WOMAN IN BROTHEL	Jamila
BARBER	Ramesh Rai
CRAWFORD MARKET	
SHOPKEEPER	Shaukat H. Inamdar
SCRIBE	Irfan Khan
AMERICAN BIG DOG	Neil Gettinger
HASHIMBHAI	Yunus Parvez
GANJA-SMOKER AT GRAVY'S	Habib Azmi

CUSTOMER AT REKHA'S HOUSE	Ramesh Gohil
JOURNALIST AT BABA'S	Sanjna Kapoor
HIPPIE GUIDE	Biswadeep Chatterjee
RAVI, REKHA'S RICH CUSTOMER	Ameer Bhai
ANGRY MAN IN MOVIE THEATRE	Ajju K. Kasam
SEXY WOMAN IN MOVIE THEATRE	Double Battery Stafford
SLEAZY MAN IN MOVIE THEATRE	Rana Singh
BUTCHER AT CRAWFORD MARKET	Ali Bhai
PARSI BAWAJI	Dinshaw Daji
TAILOR	Jayant Joshi
CROONER AT WEDDING	Prashant Jaiswal
BRIDEGROOM AT WEDDING	Hassan Kutty
FAT KID AT WEDDING	Preshit Shringarpure
COP	B.D. Sharma
HANDCUFFED MAN IN VAN	Mohammed Ali
CHILLER ROOM SONG LEADER	Dilip Das
LALUA CHOR	Alfred Anthony
MURTAZA	Ramesh Deshavani
SUPERINTENDENT	Anjan Srivastava
SUPERINTENDENT'S ECHO	Eric Paymaster
HEMLATA JOSHI	Sulbha Deshpande
CHILLUM 2	Mohan Tantaru
SOLASAAL'S FIRST CUSTOMER	Sheikh Haroon

and

THE PEOPLE OF BOMBAY

THE CREW

PRODUCER & DIRECTOR	Mira Nair
CO-PRODUCER	Mitch Epstein
STORY	Mira Nair & Sooni Taraporevala
SCREENPLAY	Sooni Taraporevala
MUSIC	L. Subramaniam
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	Anil Tejani
	Michael Nozik
	Gabriel Auer
	Cherie Rodgers
EDITOR	Barry Alexander Brown
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Sandi Sissel
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Mitch Epstein
DIRECTOR OF WORKSHOP	Barry John
HINDI DIALOGUE	Hriday Lani
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	Jane Balfour
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER	Ravi Sonie
PRODUCTION MANAGERS	Harish Amin, Vijay Gautam
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Hassan Kutty
SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Dinaz Stafford
SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Nilita Vachani
FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERAMAN	Lee Anthony Macnamara
SECOND ASSISTANT CAMERAMAN	Hiroo Keswani
THIRD ASSISTANT CAMERAMAN	Syed Layaque Ali
CAMERA ASSISTANT	Harsh Mehta
SECOND UNIT PHOTOGRAPHY	Mitch Epstein
BEST BOYS	Mulchand Dedhia
	Humayun Khwaja
DOLLY GRIP	Vangelis Kalambakas
ELECTRICIANS/LIGHTING	Mohammed Hassan Ali
	Imtiaz Ansari
	Nawab Ali
	Mahesh Kumar Martin
	Mohan Shetty

LIGHTING ASSISTANTS	Kamal
	Tara
	Ajju K. Kasam
SET CARPENTER	Shakir Mohammed
GENERATOR OPERATOR	Kamlesh Sadrani
STILL PHOTOGRAPHER	Sooni Taraporevala
ART DIRECTORS	Nitish Roy
	Nitin Desai
ART DIRECTION ASSISTANTS	Murari Sharma
	Radha Pal
SOUND MIXER	Juan Rodriguez
BOOM OPERATOR	Neil Gettinger
ASSISTANT SOUND RECORDIST	Biswadeep Chatterjee
SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR	Margie Crimmins
SOUND EDITOR	MaryEllen Porto
ASSISTANT EDITORS	Tula Goenka
	MaryEllen Porto
ASSISTANT SOUND EDITOR	Laure Sullivan
APPRENTICE SOUND EDITOR	Rosemary Abitabile
RE-RECORDING MIXER	Dominique Dalmasso
SOUND RECORDED AT	Auditoriums De Joinville
FOLEY ARTIST	Jonathan Liebling
POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR	Daniel Vassaire
FRENCH TRANSLATION & SUBTITLES	Nasreen Kabir
	Jean Francois Cornu
ACTORS IN CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS	Raghubir Yadav
	Irfan Khan
CHILDREN'S COORDINATOR	Dinaz Stafford
WORKSHOP PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	Gautam Siddharth
COSTUMES	Deepa Kakkar
CHILDREN'S COSTUMES	Nilita Vachani
	Dinaz Stafford
DRESS MAN	Mohammed Rafiq
MAKEUP ARTISTS	The Amir Family

HAIRDRESSER FOR MS. KANWAR	Mangala Acharya
HAIRDRESSER FOR MS. SHARMA	Marium
MUSIC ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY	L. Subramaniam
DRUMS	Ron Wagner
BASS	Jerry Watts
ACOUSTIC GUITAR	George Struntz
KEYBOARD	Mark Massey
TABLA	Shyam Kane
MRIDANGAM & GHATAM	P. Srinivasan
ENGINEER	Carl Lang
VOICE	Vijayshree Subramaniam
PERCUSSION	Emil Richards
HORNS	Ernie Watts
VIOLIN	L. Subramaniam
MUSIC PUBLISHED BY	Niranjani Music
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR, NEW YORK	Gloria Bremer
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR, BOMBAY	Joyce Barneto
PRODUCTION ACCOUNTANT, NEW YORK	Ken Starr, Inc.
PRODUCTION ACCOUNTANT, BOMBAY	Ambrish Manilal
NEW DELHI PRODUCTION LIAISON	Shernaz Italia
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PRODUCTION OFFICE STAFF	Nagbhushan Uday Khamkar

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	Sayeed Jhalani
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Khorshed & Naval Colah
Mark Crean
Rooky Dadachanji
Krishan & Renu Dhawan
Cyrus Driver & Family
Pat De Rousie
Peter Flood
Rashida Ghadially
Dr. Gilada
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Katy Homans
Iranis of Parsi Dairy Farm
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The Children & Staff of Asha Sadan
The Children & Staff of David Sassoon School
The Children & Staff of Dongri Remand Home
The Grant Road Gang
Mr. H.C. Jayal, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Maharashtra State Women's Council
Umakant Mishra, The Railway Board
Mr. Pathak, Central Railways
The Residents of Station Terrace, Grant Road
Western Railway Authorities
The Women of Kamathipura
The Workers of Apollo Circus
The Children of the Workshop

Shot entirely on location on the streets of Bombay

A MIRABAI FILMS PRODUCTION

NO GUTS NO GLORY
52 LOCATIONS 52 DAYS
WHAT PROBLEM? NO PROBLEM

The Salaam Children

The Salaam Children

Probably the most often asked questions about *Salaam Bombay!* are 'What are the children doing now?' and 'Are the children back on the streets?'

Unlikely as it seems to anybody who knows Bombay, the film was actually shot entirely on the streets. The question as to being 'back on the streets' just doesn't arise. We never took them off the streets. I'd shuttle them from their particular 'home' street to the location and then back again after the shot. Shafiq spent some nights in the bare room that served as a combination of storage room and production office, but it could hardly be called a 'home environment'. It was tough working this way especially when I went to inform the Bombay Central station gang that they were expected to shoot the next day, only to hear that they had left on a joy ride to Delhi !

Then there was the determination with which I tried to induce them to make plans for their future. After stressing the difficulty and improbability of making it in the film world, I pointed out the opportunities they could realize if they used us *didis* to their advantage. I remember sitting on the rocks by the sea—an inspirational place to be discussing the future, I thought. It was 28 November '87 and a cool afternoon. Raju, Shafiq and Silwa wanted to go to school; Manoj was the only one who did not object going to an Ashram; Shekhar wanted to open his own small business and Dilip wanted to become a domestic servant !

Babu laughed and said, 'Forget it *didi*, we'll carry on as always!' Francis and Anjaan agreed with him but did not mind learning more about mechanics.

The result of all this planning ? Raju, Silwa, Hansa and Ramesh are in local schools. It was far more difficult a process getting the children enrolled. The bureaucratic procedure for admitting a child into a

municipal school necessitates a birth certificate—a near impossibility for children of illiterate parents.

But it was worth the angst.

Now, six months later,every time I pay a surprise visit to Hansa, I find Ramila (Hansa's sister) and her, playing school and practicing the Gujarati alphabet.

Raju topped his class. We travel through the streets of Bombay together to the background sound of Raju and Silwa deciphering every street-hoarding—'V..I..D..E..O..C..O..N.. VIDEOCON!'

Raju, Silwa and Hansa have had short stints in front of the camera. But they always mention that it was not as good an experience as *apna Salaam Bombay*! Flatterers !

In the early workshop days, Manoj the artist of the group, used to dig mud out of the garden at Bombay Central and make beautiful figurines. He now teaches blind-children pottery and is also attending literacy classes.

Shekhar did open his business, but didn't tell me he meant a gambling business. He closed that down, opened a peanuts-stall and then worked for a short stint 'at NFDC. He has since quit that as well and works now as a dish-washer for Wedding Caterers.

Rashid, Sarfu and Shafiq were in Delhi rehearsing their roles in one of Barry John's plays, but because of reasons of their own, Sarfu and Shafiq have returned to Bombay. Shafiq says he would like to become a mechanic and learn driving when he grows up.

No matter how much I tried to dissuade, Dilip really felt he would be happy as a servant. So we found him a job with a wonderful Parsi woman. She began to make plans for him to attend literacy classes at the local church, but after two months of work, he asked for his pay and then begged to be allowed to go back home.

Sunil and Subhash have returned to their home in the country. Babu and Anthony after short stints at the NFDC, are back to their earlier jobs as busboys at a restaurant-catering service.

Early in the shooting, a production member from a well-known film company offered Tantaru a job playing Nana Patekar as a teenager. It has been a year since then and his shooting is still not complete.

The children from *Salaam Bombay!* have taken on every opportunity we have offered them, always responding with enthusiasm. It is this reaction which inspired us to create the Salaam Baalak Trust. By

starting the Learning Centres we can provide them and many more children with a continual opportunity to explore and discover.

DINAZ STAFFORD

Bombay
August 1988

The Salaam Baalak Learning Centres

From the film's inception, the creators of *Salaam Bombay!* were committed to organizing long-term services for street-children. In December of 1988, the film-makers' company, Mirabai Films, established the Salaam Baalak Trust, a non-profit Foundation based in Bombay and New Delhi. The first projects to be implemented under the auspices of the Trust are the Learning Centres in the two cities.

The Learning Centres are day centres for street-children which incorporate a holistic approach to learning. Using the street-child's perceived environment as the core of their educational system, the Centres are designed for these children. By recognizing the importance of the child's all-round education, the Centres concentrate on physical, mental and social development.

Through the aid and support of the Maharashtra State Women's Council, the Salaam Baalak Learning Centre opens its doors in Bombay on 15 August 1989. The Delhi Learning Centre will begin to operate on the Delhi railway station platform from 1 August 1989.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To provide alternative educational services oriented towards the particular needs of the street-children within their natural environment.
2. To provide health, recreational and counselling services to street-children in Bombay and New Delhi.
3. To encourage street-children to develop their potential.
4. To liaise between existing institutions for child welfare and street-children.

5. To propagate healthy living and sanitation amongst street-children.
6. To instil public awareness and respect for the rights and lives of street-children.
7. To create opportunities for street-children to explore creative expression and for their unique artistic skills and talents.
8. To provide a secure and reliable information service for street-children.
9. To provide extension services for street-children to have a healthy and happy home life.
10. To disseminate information for the primary health care of street-children.
11. To provide services whereby street-children i.e. runaways, may be reunited with their families.
12. To institute a system for individual sponsorships of street-children.

SUMMARY

The Learning Centres are located in the inner city and staffed by four workers. They each cater to thirty to thirty-five children aged ten to sixteen who live on the streets within reasonable proximity to the Centre. Hours are from ten until four with lunch provided.

These children tap into a wide base of information acquired over time in the course of living on the street. The Learning Centres, rather than discount this (as formal education is wont to do), explore the children's ideas adding explanation and clarification along the way.

The daily programme includes physical exercise (*yoga*, dance,games), the arts, group discussion, counselling, and educational subjects. The educational course work involves basic literacy, quantitation, geography, history, general science and civics.

The educational system involves taking a theme and examining it in a multi-faceted manner. For example, 'water' is a theme whereby the street-children could:

- learn to read — *paani*.
- learn about measurement of litres of liquid.

- learn about the geology of oceans.
- learn how heating transforms a liquid into a gas.
- learn about water sanitation, etc.

On occasion, special interest workshops are conducted by professional guests and facilitated by the regular staff. Professionals in diverse fields spend short periods of time at the Learning Centre giving the children access to their expertise and enthusiasm of specialists and thereby broadening their understanding of the world around them.

The extension work performs the pivotal function of informing the street-population of the Centre's activities, encouraging the children to attend, and obtaining feedback for evaluation of the projects.

Attendance is a crucial element in the success of the Learning Centres. The procedures of the projects are designed to make regular attendance attractive to the street-children. There is no attempt to coerce the children to attend regularly. Many street-children have other obligations and are unable to attend on a schedule. They are not penalized. The children who attend regularly simply get more out of the system and will be given priority when it comes to daily admittance to the Centre.

The Group Leader/Head Teacher, because of the previously mentioned 'theme approach' constantly refers back to past work. Those children who had attended in the past will be able to participate in the discussion, which ties previous work into the current topic. This way they are at once positively reinforced and able to inform those who attend on a more casual basis.

Although the children do not receive any monetary remuneration, they receive attention, some food, and reinforcements like photographs and crafted items they have made themselves.

The Learning Centres hope to achieve an impact on the street environment by turning out street-children who can read, write, quantitate and who are better informed about their environment. By acknowledging the uniqueness and individuality of each child, the children should develop a sound sense of identity and self-respect.

There is no other comprehensive programme available for children within the street-community. The majority of street-children find their own way to adulthood. Although, the Salaam Baalak Learning Centres hope to open some doors for these children, they will still find their ways in life.

The Salaam Baalak Trust Foundation

After reading this book you have learnt much about the making of the film and the street-children who have made it possible. The imagination, creativity and will to survive of these children are what transformed *Salaam Bombay!* into a compelling and irresistible story of the triumph of the human spirit.

You can help to provide practical assistance and launch these children of the spirit and talent into a life of full potential by making a contribution to the Salaam Baalak Trust Foundation.

Every rupee contributed will go directly into paying for facilities in the inner city, buying educational materials and providing salaries for a permanent staff at each location.

All royalties from the sale of this book will go to the Salaam Baalak Trust.

You have the opportunity to translate the compassion and emotion this film evokes into immediate opportunity for these street-children.

A monetary donation will ensure the continuing operation of two Learning Centres and will enable the Salaam Baalak Trust to plan more centres to help the children of the street. Please make cheques payable to the Salaam Baalak Trust, 55-A, Vasant Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-110 057.

All contributions will be acknowledged. *Salaams* and thank you for your gift to the children of the street.

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix I: Reviews

THE TIMES OF INDIA

BOMBAY, 15 JANUARY 1989

'Salaam Bombay!': triumph of the will

Where there's a will, there's a *Salaam Bombay*! To put it plainly, here's a superb achievement, a film that has you shedding a quiet tear in the dark, that has you doubling up with a bellylaugh. So close to the seams and folds of low life, Mira Nair's first feature film is remarkably perceptive and observant, a breakthrough in an age when Indian cinema is sinking further into a swamp.

Completely deserving of the ten international awards it has been garlanded with, here's a valentine to the pluck and pep of the Bombay street-kids. It is the next-to-last word about their everyday struggle with a virulent environment, a subject on which the last word can probably never be spoken. Wisely, the wonder director refrains from even trying.

Drawing from the hard-as-stone reality, Mira Nair and her co-writer Sooni Taraporevala, sensibly permit themselves the freedom of a fictional story. In that sense, Grant Road—the hub of the plot—could exist in any cranny of the monster metropolis. This is an area of darkness, lit up by the grimy faces: deranged tots pretending to be traffic cops, smarties conning 'pink-skinned' tourists, rag-pickers dreaming passionately of Sridevi, freaking out to the beat of *Hawa Hawaii*.

Gratifyingly, there isn't a hint of the moralistic. Neither is there any syrup or treacle. From the outset, rather the approach is to show it the way it is, to sturdily trek through skidrow. You have seen the kids every day, lowering your gaze as you pass them by, shrugging your shoulder that you can't do a damn (so why bother?) And the film's triumph is that it makes you care, it may not change the world but it does swipe at your incapacity to recognize the humanity of the underprivileged.

Right off, you come close to Chaipau (Shafiq Syed), a wisp of a boy whose cauliflower nose and whirlpool eyes have become immune to the sleaze of drug-dens, railway platforms, red-light dives and graveyard hide-outs. Abandoned by the circus he did odd jobs for, he vends tea now on the tough roads and pines to return to his village home, never mind the sporadic spats with his family.

It's his innocence, his need for friendship and warmth that makes Chaipau's story pithy and dramatic. There must be a million Chaipaus out there, his story could be any street-boys'. The characters he encounters come in incredible shades, whether it's his junkie pal Chillum (Raghubir Yadav) doomed to die in pain or Solasaal (Chanda Sharma), the frightened girl from Nepal sold into the flesh trade.

Chaipau treats the girl to tea, steals a baby-chicken for her. When she's ill-treated, he sends her biscuits. A profoundly moving scene, at this point, lingers on Chaipau's other little friend, Manju (Hansa Vithal), who gobbles the biscuits down in a fit of jealousy. Manju is the film's backbone, her selflessness, her affection, her all-giving trust, make her into the one real rose in the gutter. She scratches like a cat on the door when her mother, a prostitute (Aneeta Kanwar) has to 'entertain' a customer. She sleeps in the rubble when her father (Nana Patekar), a retired pimp-turned-shyster, wants to make love to his 'Meena Kumari'.

The scenes featuring Manju are haunting. The image of her conducting an imaginary phone conversation, giggling at shadow pictures on the wall when the electricity goes off, her wiggle to the song *Mera naam Chin Chin Choo* and her taunting resilience when she's carted away to a remand home, are guaranteed to shake the viewer to the bone.

You lose Manju, sequestered in the shadows. Chaipau does bolt out of the remand home. But to what? The climax is a stunner. Throughout, Mira Nair's documentary background (*India Cabaret*), enables a raw, life-on-the-lam edge. Embellishing this, is her feel for humour (the street-kids whooping it up as waiters at a wedding reception and on a *tonga* ride), her sense for shock effects (a father threatening to throw his tiny girl off a balcony) and even a gift for sensuality (the more than relevant bedroom scenes). It would be a pity if any frame of the film is misread as gratuitous or harangued with that cornball argument, 'Look, this is only highlighting the poverty of the country.'

Salaam Bombay! is also admirable for its dialogue by Hriday Lani (a kid who has eaten himself silly is asked, 'Do you have a stomach or a high court building?') Kader Khan and co. should rush to take lessons. The camera work by Sandi Sissel is first-class, opening up Bombay without exoticizing it. And the technical excellence is topped by the great ensemble acting. Aneeta Kanwar, Nana Patekar and Raghubir Yadav, all deserve medallions for their rigorous, accomplished performances.

Chanda Sharma has an amazing grace. But ultimately, the triumph is of the magnificently-talented child Hansa Vithal and the brilliantly sensitive Shafiq Syed. After this, they'll always have a room in your heart.

KHALID MOHAMED

THE TELEGRAPH

CALCUTTA, 20 JANUARY 1989

Salaam Mira Nair!

It needs guts to make a film like *Salaam Bombay*! And a whoie lot of sensitivity. It makes you feel guilty for being more privileged. It makes you wish you were out there in Bombay's Grant Road to hold Chaipau's hand when he cries. *Salaam Bombay*! hits you in the solar plexus.

Of course, the very fact that the film won the prestigious Camera d'Or at Cannes last September is one testimony to its brilliance. But for the

Indian filmgoer it holds out a special significance—that another milestone has been reached in Indian cinema. At a time when subjects like poverty and prostitution have exhausted themselves in Hindi films, Mira Nair has the courage to tear off the tinsel mask and present the reality behind. And in what style! Each frame, each character affects the viewer's psyche, so powerfully is the story told. And human dignity, will, sense of survival, fate, humour, are all paid their due tributes.

Salaam Bombay! celebrates the street-children of Bombay, their survival instincts, their spirit of freedom, their self-respect and their bondage. From the moment ten-year-old Krishna (Shafiq Syed) finds that he has been deserted by the circus company for which he works, his survival clock starts ticking. The very spot where the circus had been hours ago, now an enormous stretch of desolation and ash heaps, fills the screen and the viewer gets the first taste of Nair's subtle but sure touch which grips reality by its collar. Krishna's eyes do the rest.

Nowhere in the film, however, are any fingers pointed or sermons preached. It merely documents the street-wise education Krishna receives and the lessons he learns from life. He gets a job as a tea-delivery boy (Chaipau) at a pittance of five bucks a day, sleeps with a group of urchins on a platform at night and dreams of saving 500 rupees to take home to his village and his widowed mother. But he can never save, for his wages are cut when he cannot collect money from the local *dadas* for the tea they have from him; they scoff at his innocent pleas and laugh on his face. He cannot save because he empathizes with the nubile Nepali girl (Chanda Sharma) who is forcefully brought to the neighbouring brothel where he serves tea; he has to pay for the glass she breaks in a fit of frustration. He cannot save because there is always Chillum (Raghubir Yadav), drug pedlar and addict, to filch his money for a life-saving smoke. But Krishna carries on undaunted in his quest for 500 rupees.

His burden is lightened by the shy little Manju (Hansa Vithal), daughter of the prostitute Rekha (Aneeta Kanwar), Manju finds a kindred spirit in Krishna (now called Chaipau) for she, like him, has no play-mates in the brothel. When Chaipau is out on his rounds for survival, she spends her time sitting outside her mother's room or scratching on the door frame, if there is a customer inside. When Chaipau and she get together, they forage for money and also twist to the tune of *Mera naam Chin Chin Choo*.

But life is more serious for Chaipau. Chillum, who has befriended him in the meantime, teaches him to be the alley cat and even introduces him to drugs. Chaipau learns the art of survival, but his human ties bind him down. When Chillum dies for want of heroin, the boy is left to fend for himself. One day he and Manju are picked up by the police and they find themselves in separate remand homes (the 'Chiller' Rooms that Chillum had often warned Chaipau about and which all street-children wish to avoid). It is another nightmare for Chaipau, for there are bullies, mad boys and extorters there, too. When he escapes, and arrives at his 'home' in the brothel, he finds the Nepali girl being taken away by her first customer and Rekha leaving home. Chaipau's world turns upside down.

In a climax which is shattering to say the least, Chaipau, now penniless, alone and a murderer to boot, breaks

down and cries amidst the din and jollity of the Ganpati festival.

Drama, pathos, deprivation and humour run like parallel threads in *Salaam Bombay*! Nair handles the story (by her and Sooni Taraporevala) with a finesse that recalls works of Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak. But she is constantly aided by the sterling performances of the cast. Nana Patekar as Baba, Manju's father and a pimp-turned-shyster, makes a powerful impact—now romantic, now crude. Raghubir Yadav deserves an award for his portrayal of the ragged, witty, drug-addict. He goes so deep into his characterization that you have chills when he goes cold turkey. And Aneeta Kanwar once again proves her versatility as the endearing Rekha, as a loving mother, as a sensual 'Meena Kumari' (as Baba calls her) and as the essential woman.

Charming Hansa Vithal will make us take notice of street-children from now on. Her large, understanding eyes, as though of an adult, her giggle, her wonder at a porcelain figurine, strike chords which words cannot express. And Shafiq Syed simply brings out all one's protective instincts. His restrained portrayal should be a lesson for veteran Hindi film actors.

In fact, all the children in *Salaam Bombay*! could teach people how to face a camera, so carefree are their performances. Special mention must be made of Chanda Sharma who plays the Nepali prostitute. She gives innocence and helplessness new meanings.

Music plays an important part of *Salaam Bombay*! creating moods perfectly under the undisguised virtuosity of L. Subramaniam. And Sandi Sissel's direction of photography shows Bombay in a new light. Nair has made excellent use of all these talented people for this Indo-French-British production. The eleven international awards that the film has received so far is tribute to their excellence and her commitment. '*Salaam* Mira Nair!'

BARNALI MITRA-RAY

SUNDAY OBSERVER

BOMBAY, 10 JULY 1988

Misplaced Applause

The selection of *Salaam Bombay!* by NFDC and the applause it received at Cannes are totally misplaced. A film is a work of art. The subject of such a work can't be the mere exposition of filth and suffering of humanity. The fact that the Third World is afflicted with several ills is not news. The rest of the world looks at us as if we are rare and exotic animals. It is no wonder that this film won great appreciation from a gathering largely dominated by people from the developed countries.

Our film-makers, particularly those who aspire to win accolades abroad should grow up and begin to view India in a broader perspective. If a film like this is meant to be a window to Bombay or India, it is a shame on the citizens of the country.

DR. N. SUBRAHMANYAM

INDIA ABROAD

NEW YORK, 16 DECEMBER 1988

Art and Truth in *Salaam Bombay!*

Every society has its lofty pillars and sordid sides. The establishment tends to magnify the former and ignore, if not hide, the latter. But sensitive writers, great artists and (in our own times) intelligent movie-makers bring to our attention the less palatable dimensions of society and thus raise our consciousness of society's ailments.

Salaam Bombay ! is one such effort. It depicts with great artistry the wretchedness of some of the downtrodden in the great city of Bombay. It exposes the squalor of its red-light district where tender boys and girls without schooling or parental love mingle freely with pimps and prostitutes, doing errands for brothels. Here kidnapped teenage virgins are nurtured and bedecked to be deflowered by high-paying clients.

Little lads gag and rob a kindly old man. A drug-addict who is kicked around by his brutal boss dies in abject abandonment. A prostitute mother takes along her daughter while making a professional call so as to protect the little-one from her ruthless father. Innocent youths are unceremoniously arrested and put in an institution without trial or jury.

All this and a hundred other sorry snippets from ugly reality are masterfully presented in this movie. They rudely awaken us to aspects of the India we love and sing praises of, but aspects that we rarely stare in the face. *Salaam Bombay!'s* artistry touches us, its performers impress us, its pathos moves us, and its revelations embarrass us.

Amidst all this hopeless misery there are also some hints of tenderness as of the little boy to the Sweet Sixteen, and of the whore to her innocent daughter; and humorous glimpses: as of the youth mimicking the shallow stars of an escapist movie, and of a boy perpetually practicing a karate kick.

The reaction to this movie will depend on whether or not one is affiliated to India. One and all will admire the cinematographic skills of the director and commend the film for its artistic qualities. But whereas Westerners are likely to applaud this other view of complex India, Indians may feel somewhat uneasy at what they see, for it could remind them of Mayo's *Mother India* of half a century ago. The pictures of goddess in the bordello, the repetition of *'tvameva maata,'* the Ganpati procession, etc. in the context of such pathetic predicaments could strike them as sham and hollow in a callous society.

And when they see these bright-eyed lads in perennial and never-winning struggles, they are bound to be appalled by the colossal wastage of human potential. We will have to rethink the notion of Indian brain drain.

But even from this distance we cannot escape the discomforting thought that the characters on the

screen are our brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, for we are all part of a large extended family. Who knows, the movie may inspire another Mother Teresa to go and work in the slums of Bombay.

That such a movie is the work of an Indian is testimony to the fact that India is now a strong and mature nation, for a mature people frankly bring into the open their blemishes instead of becoming defensive when foreigners bring them to their attention.

V.V. RAMAN

TIME OUT

LONDON, 25 JANUARY 1989

'Salaam Bombay!'

Bombay studios churn out a panoply of fat-woman love films we never get to see. When we do see an Indian movie, it's from the other side of India, Satyajit Ray's russet-brown Bengal. And so the welter of garish Neapolitan pinks and blues, yellows and greens in Mira Nair's first feature comes as a brilliant shock. Ostensibly, the film tells the story of Krishna, a ten-year-old circus boy who runs away to 'the nearest big city', where he learns to fend for himself but its glory lies in the intricacy of a dozen interlocking stories, making the plot as densely populated and complex as a nineteenth-century novel's. Very quickly we come to know the good and bad points of a large cast of utterly human low-life characters: the Madame and the virgin; the gang of street-urchins; the pimp, the tea-seller and the dealer; all of them resigned to the sweet street evils of Bombay. For her debut, Nair has broken a mould: to the astonishment of the Bombay film community, she insisted on filming not in a studio but in the vice-laden streets of her story. She spent months rehearsing the children of those streets, and then combined them with a few professional actors. The result is a film which is impressively modest and impressively true. Long after the screen is dark, you'll remember the ice-cream colours of Bombay. The Indian new wave is born.

PIERRE HODGSON

THE NEW YORK TIMES

In a City Where Life Is Just Barely Possible

Krishna, a small, spindly-legged ten-year-old country boy, is kicked out of the house by his mother and told not to return until he has 500 rupees to pay for a scooter he has ruined. Krishna drifts to the nearest big city where, without effort, he is absorbed into Bombay's proliferating population of homeless street-kids.

A concerned documentary would

probably treat Krishna as one of the faceless mob, important mostly as a representation of a human condition. The film that contained him would be a general statement, and Krishna himself, old beyond his years, would remain unknowable, forever lost. How sad, we would be asked to say, and then, but that's India.

The achievement of *Salaam Bombay!* Mira Nair's remarkably good first fiction feature, is that Krishna has his own identity. He's an utterly specific character. Krishna may be naive, but he quickly learns how to get along in a world of beggars, prostitutes, drug pushers and vicious rip-off artists, some of whom are quite respectable.

*

For a film about such hopelessness, *Salaam Bombay!* is surprisingly cheering, not because Ms. Nair has sentimentalized the scene but because, being Indian herself, she understands the particular reality of what appears, to us tourists, to be hopelessness. Seen close-up, rather than from the window of a taxi-cab, despair is not so easily recognized. Life, lived always on the edge of disaster, is coped with, if not always with success.

Salaam Bombay! isn't exactly an upper, but neither is it a predigested social treatise. That the film is less nightmarish than Hector Babenco's riveting *Pixote* may have something to do with its being set in India rather than Brazil. There's a kind of ancient sophistication about the Bombay demimonde that is different from life in Sao Paulo, where widespread poverty and rootlessness are only a little older than the glass-and-steel high-rises of the very rich.

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Ms. Nair, thirty-one, who was born and brought up in India and studied at Harvard as an undergraduate, has made four documentaries, all in India, which obviously helped prepare her for this work of fiction. One doesn't necessarily feed the other, however. *Salaam Bombay!* demonstrates this young director's extraordinary self-control when faced with fiction's manifold possibilities. The movie possesses a free-flowing exuberance not often associated with the documentary form.

Even more unusual is the director's success with her actors. Without the film's program notes, I'm not sure I'd be able to tell the professionals from the non-professionals.

The children, all non-professionals, are splendid, especially Shafiq Syed, the little boy who plays Krishna, and Hansa Vithal, as the tiny, stoic daughter of a Bombay prostitute and her pimp. The exceptionally good pro-actors include Aneeta Kanwar as the prostitute, Nana Patekar as the pimp and Raghubir Yadav as a God-forsaken drug-addict who, early on, befriends Krishna.

Salaam Bombay! which was written by Sooni Taraporevala from a story by her and Ms. Nair, is rich with self-explanatory incident. Action is character. Dialogue is spare. Even the camera is laconic. Though shot (beautifully by Sandi Sissel) entirely on location in Bombay, under conditions that could not have been easy, the film and its characters are never overwhelmed by local color.

Ms. Nair sees Bombay less as a recognizable city than as the ever-present chaos surrounding Krishna and the people who move in and out of his life. Bombay is a place of noise, restless movement and no privacy whatsoever. It is squalor accepted as

the natural order of things, and thus accommodated.

Ms. Nair does not share this fatalism, but in *Salaam Bombay!* she allows us to examine it without panic, and without patronizing it. She is a new film-maker to watch.

VINCENT CANBY

LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES, 19 OCTOBER 1988

Movie Review

A Child's-Eye View of a Gritty World

The streets of Bombay are choked with children—runaways, castoffs, cripples—whose lives are lived at pavement level, with the stink of truck fumes and the din of traffic never out of their heads. They are pantomime artists, pickpockets, a flamboyant miniature circus; they will dance, sing, blow bubbles, slap your windshield with a dirty rag or deliver milky jars of tea, anything for a few paisa in the pockets of their outsize pants.

They sleep on cement cushioned only by cardboard or, like *Salaam Bombay's!* tiny Insect, in a wrecked motorcycle sidecar, one eye cocked for the police vans that swoop down to take them to the institutionalized children's homes the kids call Chiller Rooms, not without reason.

Their survival—more than that, the spirit with which they persist—is an ongoing wonder. An equal miracle is director Mira Nair's assured and passionate film about them (at the Nuart), fiction with its roots in the bitter truth. It manages, in same way that *The 400 Blows* managed, to lift us beyond its pain to compassionate understanding of a troubling scene.

Nair has a wonderful eye and a truly cinematic sense of story. She doesn't tell in words what the eye of her camera can say with more authenticity. (Her cinematographer is Sandi Sissel, whose control of lighting and composition may remind you of Maria Cosindas or of Mary Ellen Mark.)

But as a director, Nair must also have a fierce insistence on truth, because none of her film's core of real street-kids can ever be discovered 'acting'. They range from early teenagers down to the tiny eight-year-old (Hansa Vithal) who has the crucial role of Manju, the child of a brothel prostitute and her handsome, thuggish pimp, Baba (Nana Patekar).

We pick our way through this feverish world with the same curiosity as the film's central figure, ten-year-old Krishna (eleven-year old Shafiq Syed, a phenomenon). Abandoned when his traveling-circus employers move out abruptly he has headed uncertainly for the first big city where he can earn 500 rupees– Bombay. It's the price of a scooter he has destroyed: the price, he hopes, of winning back his mother's favor.

In the city, he's green, a 'bump-

kin,' a mark for kids even half his age. But soon he's swept into a little experienced clot with Chillum (Raghubir Yadav), a twenty-year-old drug-addict, at its centre. Krishna gets a job working as a tea boy, he even loses his name to the nickname Chaipau 'one who gets tea and bread.'

The Kamathipura area's brothel No. 109 is the film's main setting. From there, Chillum sells Baba's drugs, sampling them liberally himself. And after one glimpse of Sweet Sixteen (Chanda Sharma), a tear-stained, shanghaied innocent whose virginity will bring the brothel 10,000 rupees, Krishna/Chaipau haunts No. 109 too, mutely captivated. *Salaam Bombay's!* intensely cinematic quality is heightened when Sweet Sixteen and Chaipau must mime their feelings; she speaks only Nepali, he only Hindi. Somehow there is an echo of *Broken Blossoms*.

Like Chaipau, we are thrown into this precarious life with no explanation. But the film-makers are canny. We identify so quickly with Chaipau that when, for example, Sweet Sixteen dashes the glass of tea he's brought her on to the stone floor, we *know* her gesture will cost him money at the tea-stall. Or when his customers complain that there's too much water in the tea, it's because the drenched boy has been making his rounds in the pouring rain. No sociologist made points more poignantly.

Bizarrely, even as we watch Chaipau's life at close range, *Salaam Bombay!* hasn't quite the bleak hopelessness of *Pixote*. It even has moments of outrageous sass, although they come at appalling points in the action. The movie's liveliness also comes because the film vibrates with the mad, electric colors of India itself, from painted wood with a faded patina to the golds and silvers and prints of Manju's gaudy dress-up clothes.

If the young actors are impressive, the film's professional actors are their equals, in particular Manju's tragic mother (Aneeta Kanwar), the voracious Madame (Shaukat Azmi) and Yadav's full-scale portrait of the irrational despairing drug habit. (The film is Times-rated: Mature for its subject matter.)

Chaipau's maturing—wising up is nearer the mark—is tragedy enough. Nair lets us watch the subtle changes in him, from the open-faced little boy in the country to the face of ravaged innocence at the close. (The last sequence is framed by a wild street festival for the elephant god Ganpati, which will inevitably bring back memories of *Children of Paradise*). It is a luminously intelligent performance by Syed, making the question of his future all the more poignant.

Salaam Bombay! won Nair the Camera d'Or as best new director at Cannes this year. (Last weekend, it won first prize at Los Angeles' Women in Film Festival.) Watching the strength of her vision and her craft, balanced by the empathy shown in all her work so far—her earlier documentaries as well—there is every reason to believe that *Salaam Bombay!* marks the opening of an extraordinary career.

SHEILA BENSON

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

HOLLYWOOD, 13 SEPTEMBER 1988

'Salaam Bombay!'

After four documentary works, the fourth being the controversial *Children of Desired Sex* (1987), Indian-born film-maker Mira Nair marks her feature fiction film debut with *Salaam Bombay!* the closing feature at the Gala Presentation for the Director's Fortnight at Cannes 1988. It's no wonder Nair's film was afforded this propitious honor.

In an auspicious film debut, director Mira Nair has crafted an urban masterpiece, a poignant movie that observantly chronicles a street-child's nightmarish existence.

Salaam Bombay! was shot, conceived, produced and directed by Nair. Her painful, perceptive look at the street-children of Bombay is a moving, dramatic work that undoubtedly will be the highlight of this year's New York Film Festival.

Nair ferreted Chiller Rooms (children's institutions), brothels, jails and railway stations looking for young street toughs. From 130 kids, who participated in her theatre workshop, she made final selections. Cast as the leading urchin is Shafiq Syed, an eleven-year-old rag-picker. Adult supporting roles were filled by professionals.

The mix of the natural and inexperienced with trained thespians works remarkably well. The kids exude a genuine, unbridled vitality; the adults emote and interpret.

The story is about a young boy named Krishna (Shafiq Syed) who is sent to Bombay from the outskirts of town on an errand. When he returns to the travelling circus he once belonged to, he discovers that the tents are gone and he's been left stranded. Relocating to the city centre to survive he becomes a 'Chaipau', a boy who delivers tea and bread. Ruefully, he saves his precious, hard-earned rupees so he can someday return to his mother's home.

Daily deliveries to a brothel introduce the boy to an assortment of low-life characters. There is Baba (Nana Patekar), the kingpin and drug lord of the red-light district, and Baba's flunky, Chillum (Raghubir Yadav), a twenty-five-year-old drug-seller who takes the young charge under his untrustworthy wing.

Baba's eight-year-old daughter Manju (Hansa Vithal) becomes Krishna's play-mate. Her mother, Rekha (Aneeta Kanwar), is a lady of the night who plies her trade as her daughter sits outside the brothel door. And Solasaal (Chanda Sharma) a.k.a. 'Sweet Sixteen' is a nervous, yet-to-be-deflowered prostitute who has captured Krishna's heart.

Urban squalor is evidenced by abject poverty, desperate people and desperate living. Prostitution and drug-selling are products of necessity. And —through the eyes of the young, naive protagonist—we see these vocations as normal, everyday activities.

Eventually, what was once a barely tolerable existence turns into one of indescribable hostility, jealousy and despair. Chillum looses favor with Baba. Baba squires 'Sweet Sixteen' to Rekha's dismay. Chillum, who is strung out on drugs, becomes com-

pletely dependent on Krishna. And Manju and Krishna are snared by the police. As the film skids to a close, all these personal stories intertwine and head for inescapable tragedy.

The story was conceived by Nair and Sooni Taraporevala, but Taraporevala gets credit for merging the ideas into a comprehensible, powerful, vibrant screenplay. The characters are colorful, memorable and out of the ordinary.

Their odd relationships–Chillum the big brother to Krishna, Rekha the prostitute and jealous wife of Baba, Krishna and Solasaal the unrequited lovers–defy imagination. Yet these relationships, formed to help each other cope in a depraved, unforgiving world, are never less than pure and natural. And, the events that lead these people's wretched lives to certain cataclysm, fall into place like a stacked deck of ominous Tarot cards.

Mira Nair's direction is virtually undetectable. One is never cognizant that her cast is performing or that she is controlling their interactions. Her guidance is so discreet that seeing her film, her visions, is like being a tourist in a foreign hotel room who pulls back the curtains and peers down on a grisly, dirty, unconscionable street-scene. That distinct feeling of estrangement, astonishment and disbelief has been masterfully created by this astute director.

Furthermore, when one considers that Nair is working with a host of unprofessional, untrained child actors, one must assume that her talent runs very deep indeed.

Little Shafiq Syed, a bold, uninhibited youth who keeps the viewer riveted to the screen, is a superb casting choice. Vibrant and focused, his performance is surprisingly consistent and engaging.

A solid supporting cast assists him, but some of them stand out dramatically: Aneeta Kanwar reigns supreme and sublime as a labourer in the world's oldest profession. Raghubir Yadav, mesmerizing as a depraved junkie, gives an Oscar-caliber portrayal. Almost as stunning is Nana Patekar, the menacing, foreboding Baba.

All scenes in this gutter-level epic were shot in actual houses of prostitution, train stations or in Bombay homes. The cluttered, crowded streets are not back lots but teeming Indian boulevards. The costumes, production design (Mitch Epstein) and sound effects conjure images of a dense, intriguing and very foreign metropolis.

Top-notch editing by Barry Alexander Brown and deft, revealing, photography by Sandi Sissel makes this 113-minute film move quickly. There's no time for boredom. The pacing, setting, characters and their ghastly fates give little time for attention to sway during this journey into the armpit of Bombay.

Comparisons to Hector Babenco's *Pixote* are obvious. That film bordered on the horrific. This thrilling film never reaches that kind of intensity . . . but it comes awfully close.

DWIGHT BROWN

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

28 OCTOBER, 1988

A World Awry

The simple, unadorned truth is nearly always more riveting—and more poignant—than the most lavishly concocted drama. The truth in present-day Bombay is that thousands of children live on the streets, prey to poverty-inspired malevolence that conspires to rob them of their innocence and joy for life. *Salaam Bombay!* is an unsentimental tribute to the spirit and resilience of those children, a fictional story based on fact that succeeds simultaneously as a drama and as a document of the interlocking forces against which the children operate.

Salaam Bombay! is the filmic equivalent of an ethnographic, anthropological study–observation via immersion in a cultural setting. Produced, directed and co-written by Mira Nair, the film is an example of how creatively assembled fiction can sometimes illustrate the complexity of a real-life situation with far greater economy and force than a straightforward documentary.

Film theorist and director Paul Rotha once wrote that the ideal documentarian would be part sociologist, part cameraperson and part poet. The latter role is one not always associated with the documentary tradition, though of course it is our best poets and dramatists who crystallize our experience for us–and generally more succinctly than do history books, scientific journals or government reports.

Nair made four documentaries prior to *Salaam Bombay!*, her first feature. Though not a poet by trade, she has a poet's ear for the truth—and for the rhythm of her culture. She also has the foresight to allow her subjects to speak for themselves, serving as more a channel for their stories than an author and removing herself as moral arbiter of the events that unfold. Given the subject matter her restraint is admirable: the film is all the more powerful because of it.

In keeping with her documentary roots, Nair shot *Salaam!* in a nearly *verité* style, using the streets of Bombay and its brothels, shops and apartments as her sets. Much of the material in the film was culled from the lives of Bombay street-children, 130 of whom performed their stories for the director and her co-writer during the two months of improvisational workshops before filming began. Nineteen of the workshop children appear in the film, including its star, eleven-year-old Shafiq Syed.

Syed plays Krishna, kicked out of his house by his mother and later abandoned by the traveling circus he works for. He comes to Bombay to earn the 500 rupees he was unjustly accused of stealing from his brother. He hopes to return home soon. In Bombay, Krishna becomes Chaipau ('the one who delivers tea'), bringing tea to the denizens of one of Bombay's red-light districts. The plot of the film, such as it is, revolves around his attempts to earn the money to return home, the lessons he learns about life and his attraction to 'Sweet Sixteen' a naive Nepalese girl kidnapped and forced into prostitution.

Hope springs eternal for even the

most hardened of those living in Bombay's underworld. Baba, the hot-headed pimp and drug lord, moved by Sweet Sixteen's beauty and innocence, dreams of rescuing her from the brothel and the two fleeing Bombay. Baba's fantasy is partly that of a vulture, but there is a certain naïvete to his dream as well. He neglects, however, to tell Sweet Sixteen he once made the same promise to the mother of his daughter Manju, the mother who now turns tricks in her one-room apartment while the lonely Manju plays jacks outside.

Nair depicts a world awry, where poverty controls the pace of life, forcing all the players to wrestle each other for the few scraps fate throws their way. Chillum the drug-addict steals the money he knows his 'friend' Chaipau is saving for his trip home. A gleeful Madame can scarcely contain herself when the virgin Sweet Sixteen appears at the brothel; the girl will fetch a great sum, but only if Baba can be persuaded to 'tame her.'

Everyone is desperately needy in this film and the first casualty for the street-children is their innocence. Newcomers such as Chaipau quickly find themselves prey to adults as well as other youths. But the adults are trapped as well. Nair is too matter-of-fact in her portrayal of their circumstances to paint them as victims, but clearly they are just as helpless in the face of the chaos that surrounds them as the kids.

Nair was in part-inspired to make *Salaam!* by Brazilian director Hector Babenco's *Pixote*, a 1981 film about a child-hustler from Sao Paolo, but her film also recalls Vittorio de Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* (1949) in its use of real locations and non-professional actors (only the adults and one of the children are professionals in *Salaam!*). Unlike *The Bicycle Thief*, however, Nair eschews concentration on her characters' moral dilemmas. Her people—adults and children alike—thus remain fully human, never reduced to being symbols of the causes or effects of the social disarray in which they find themselves.

There are two scenes in which Nair points out the dubious value of outside judgements on others' lives. The first seems a more direct comment on Nair's view of her own intrusion into Bombay's underworld. As an amusement, Baba drives a journalist away in horror with a seemingly sadistic display in which uses his flunky Chillum as a foil. Although in real life Nair has made some efforts so that her film-making foray will leave behind a positive legacy, in her film she seems to admit that the agenda of even the most well-intentioned outsider is more than likely beside the point given the reality of life in Bombay.

Equally irrelevant is the State, which is represented only briefly in *Salaam!*. Manju and Chaipau, returning from a wedding at which they have been servers, are picked up for no good reason by the police and end up in reformatories. In the boys' reformatory, there are kids originally picked up for such trivial offenses as pissing in the street or loitering who've been stuck in prison for as many as five years.

Manju, lucky enough to have not one but two parents (however erratic) come to retrieve her, winds up a ward of the State because, according to the government, prostitutes are unfit mothers. It is telling that the social worker who informs Manju's mother of the State's decision ignores the fact that unlike so many of the children Manju at least has someone who cares about her. Nair for once almost puts forth her own case (that the govern-

ment is out of touch? that its priorities are askew?) via the social worker's statements, but here again she retreats, preferring to focus on the city-dwellers' stories.

This latter scene hints at a possible flaw in Nair's approach, namely that by reducing the film-maker's point of view the audience has less of a sense of what to make of all the 'facts' assembled. Nair certainly has denied the audience the easy sense of outrage or catharsis that might have been the result had she taken more of a moral posture, for example. It remains unclear what Nair feels it all means, although her admiration for the children's life-affirming stance in the face of their trials comes across.

For this viewer, *Salaam Bombay!* was a far more powerful experience precisely because of the film-maker's restraint. Its fictive elements cohere the documentary ones, illustrating the 'facts' but, with two exceptions (the most glaring being Chaipau's trusting Chillum one time too many, even for one as naïve and trusting as the teaboy is), never altering them to aid the narrative flow. The film moves quickly to the heart of the children's existence, conveying their spirit with great clarity. And if Nair downplays detailed analysis of the social problems—homelessness, poverty, inattention to population control etc.—lurking behind the visuals, she has nevertheless created a vivid tableau that humanizes the experience of these people who have survived them.

DANIEL MANGIN

PREMIERE MAGAZINE

PARIS, AUGUST 1988

Salaam Bombay!

A state of shock! When one arrives in Bombay, one question arises: how do they get by? The city is a boisterous beehive of activity and almost frightening. The people are in perpetual motion: they swarm ceaselessly about in every direction. And children are everywhere in this dense mass of humanity. The industrious children are up to a million things: shining shoes, hawking newspapers, or delivering tea and bread around the neighborhood. It is as a teaboy that ten-year-old Krishna/Chaipau (Shafiq Syed) has earned his daily bread since he arrived in the big city from his small town. He understands very quickly how it all works. The hierarchy on the street is regulated by implacable law. There is no choice: one must survive.

Salaam Bombay! is fiction which is fed by the facts of these streets: drugs, prostitution and robbery are handled with the authority of a documentary. It is a cinema of reality. With such a subject taken from life, one could've expected a tear-jerker about the condition of street-children in the heart of a big Indian city. Wrong! Director Mira Nair follows an unexpected path. She shows us children who thrive, who learn from the day they take their first step how to negotiate these teeming streets. These are children without parents for the most part, but they create their own families made up of children like themselves.

They are proud, often funny, never desperate and evidently endearing. There is no time for self-pity in their lives even though childhood is nothing but a brief transitory stage from the womb to the sidewalks of Bombay.

Every event is an excuse for a party. For example, after one of them dies of an overdose, the children involve the entire neighborhood in the funeral procession. The funeral ceremony very quickly turns into a carnival. The smallest void is a pretext to gather the forces. There is, at least, solidarity on this bad trip. Mira Nair avoids the too-easy traps of wretchedness and voyeurism. She gives us an authentic life lesson. This authenticity embraces the actors as well, so that it is impossible to differentiate the professionals from the amateurs who enhance the scenario (or screenplay) with their own experience.

Salaam Bombay! is a cry from the heart—a magnificent hymn to life in a city where the princes are the children.

BERTRAND MOSCA

(Translated by Martha Spanninger)

Appendix II: Editorials

THE TIMES OF INDIA

BOMBAY, 30 JANUARY 1989

No *Salaam*, Bombayite

Thank you Cannes, you've helped Bombay discover that it has street-children. A film-maker, off-beat, female, NRI, living in New York but still ripening her career on raw Indian themes would by itself comprise the sort of combination that the city finds as irresistible as pizza with *pau-bhaji* topping. But key-in ten 'international awards' and you have a mix that instantly puts into turbo mode the penthouse notion of social conscience: all social Bombay has had nothing else on its mind ever since *Salaam Bombay!* was premiéred here recently.

True, they had been dabbled in earlier by the *khadi*-and-*Kolhapuri chappal* brigade, but now, thanks to the global salutes, these street-kids have soared far beyond the realms of homespun social worker and into the big league of the cause with the designer label. They have now taken their place among the yuppies of do-gooderism, in the anointed company of the likes of, say, 'save the ozone layer' or 'release Nelson Mandela.'

Thus, there is palpable embarrassment every time someone lapses into the old conditioned reflex, and barks, 'take your grubby paws off my car', when a tattered urchin rushes up at a red signal to polish the windscreen. 'Watch it,' cries the horrified chorus from the back seat, 'you could be talking to the next academy award winner.'

Since, thanks to Mira Nair, Bombay Hindi is now no longer down-market *filmi* and has become *cinematique*, college-kids are brushing up on alley slang. *Bundal mat maro* instead of don't give *lapet* is the new put-down when someone tries to pull a fast one. *Ghatiya* chic has come into its own. Reportedly, it is only a matter of time before the standard coffee shop greeting, the nasally whined, *haaai* is substituted with 'hello, mister, how do you do?' pronounced as crudely as co-ed accents can manage.

The new line is from the old Geeta Dutt number revived in the film and jived to by Ms. Nair and her 'location' cast at the premiére, and Bombay's hip young would happily descend to do a similar dance to it as well if only they could get the music on compact disc.

Truly, no one can dare charge the trendies with not identifying with those on the other side of the dream sequence. They never fail to get totally into the cause they have made their own for the moment. See, aren't they all into the vests emblazoned with *Salaam Bombay!* that the ghetto gang was uniformed in on opening night? Let no one accuse Bombayites of not demanding a commitment that fits them to a 'T'. Or, at least, to a T-shirt.

BACHI J. KARKARIA

Appendix III: Interviews

CINEMA INDIA-INTERNATIONAL

1988

'Many stories in India are just crying out to be made'

—Mira Nair

We met Mira Nair at her suite in the President Hotel for an interview. Attractive and vivacious, Mira was all agog with stories and anecdotes of Cannes, *Salaam Bombay!* and 'my children', as she calls them. In the middle of the interview, one of them, Shafiq (the boy who plays Chaipau in the film) walked in. They obviously shared a very good rapport. That easy camaraderie between the two—director and actor, a sophisticated woman and a boy from the streets—spoke volumes about the spirit in which the film was made. A spirit of warmth, care and concern.

Excerpts from the interview:

CII: A film like this could have been sent to the competition at Cannes.

M.N.: Well, we were asked to. But since this was the first film, it was felt that it was quite fragile, also we didn't have the kind of money to do the sort of showbiz and spectacle that the official competition demands. The passion for cinema that exists in the Director's Fortnight is wholly different from what exists in the competition. The competition is about dollars and showbiz and the Director's Fortnight is about cinema and the people. In the official competition, you have to wear a bow-tie and then only enter the auditorium. I mean we had to spend fifty dollars on a bow-tie, so that we could enter to get the award.

CII: Whatever you say, Cannes is Cannes. No festival can beat it.

M.N.: Yes. There is a sort of myth about Cannes that one hears before, which is true. For us it was. After the tumultuous reception at the world premiére, my co-producer said, 'Don't leave your phone in the morning, it will start ringing,' and I just laughed. But it was true. The phone rang from 6.30 in the morning.I did thirty-six interviews in just three days. And this is before the award. The film was a phenomenon. No other film received that kind of warmth and passion. The people were just sobbing and crying and laughing. They didn't move from the theatre. When the film finished, there was a spotlight from the top focussing on me and the crew, where we were sitting, and everything else was dark. And the people just stood up and clapped for, I think, ten minutes. Then they brought me out into the foyer and everybody from outside came inside and the doors were locked. Nobody left. It was like a *gherao*. I just stood there and they clapped for another fifteen minutes. I was in tears. I was completely paralyzed. There was so much emotion in the audience. And it was truly the first

audience of the film. Nobody else had seen it before. That was terrifying. As the maker of my first film, I was hoping it would deliver (the message). They told me at the end of the festival that every year there was a fairy tale at Cannes. And this year it was *Salaam Bombay!*

CII: How did you do the casting?

M.N.: The main casting—the film is about children, as you know, and my idea from the beginning was always to use the children from the streets of Bombay, because it is my firm belief that the kind of story that Sooni Taraporevala and I conceived could not be made by children who are professional child actors. The film was inspired by their very inimitable style, their spirit for survival, their flamboyance and their humour in the face of what is obviously a difficult existence. We knew the film would be shot around Grant Road. So we wanted to hold the workshop in that area. We wanted local kids from the heart of the city and not the suburbs. We targeted certain areas—beaches, railway platforms and streets and told them again—day after day—about the workshop. We said we were going to do a play of their lives and whether they would participate. It would be like a job and had to be taken seriously and they would have to commit a certain amount of time to us and they were sort of intrigued.

On the first day of the workshop, 130 children showed up. And the workshop, I knew, would be a very ambitious and a very exacting way to work with kids. And I needed a lot of help. So I asked an old friend, Barry John, who really has a special gift with children, to come to Bombay and work as the director of the workshop. Raghubir Yadav came as an actor and another young graduate from NSD, Irfan Khan, came also.

When we had this workshop, which was basically for six weeks, we auditioned the 130 down to twenty-five kids. And we had a whole series of exercises in movements and improvisations and discussions in which both the children and all of us talked. The whole idea, the spirit of the workshop, was meeting the children halfway and not dictating to them what to do but getting them to feel comfortable to speak about their lives and being themselves, with us.

In the process, around the fourth week, we told them it was a film and began to bring in scenes from the script for improvisation and rehearsal into the workshop. At that point, we also got the video camera in. Basically to unteach them, as Barry would say, about Amitabh Bachchan and the whole idea of formula acting; teach them about camera movement and that when it's a close-up, how subtle the expression should be, because it's all magnified on the screen. This idea of subtlety—what is real and what is not real—was communicated to them not by telling them but by showing them on screen.

CII: How did you choose Chaipau?

M.N.: He distinguished himself in about three weeks in the workshop when we used to have these improvisations—very simple. Raghu would be the *bhelpuri*-seller and each kid had to simply go and buy a plate of *bhelpuri* and nothing, of course, existed, you had to mime. That was all we told them. Shafiq just picked up, from a trunk of props we had, somebody's flashy raincoat and strode in and sat there like a lord and said, '*Ek* plate *bhelpuri lau*' and Raghu said, '*Paisa hai to nikal*,' treating him like a street-kid. He said, '*Hum* commissioner *ka bachcha hai. Kya bolta hai?* Licence *nikaldega tera*.' And he invented this entire

scenario, and Raghu played with him. Shafiq nearly came to blows with him. Finally, Raghu gave him the plate. He ate it very slowly with great relish, which didn't exist, of course, and then he winked at the audience—at us. He is a remarkable kid. Finally, it was so clear, that he should play Chaipau, when we had a screen-test with Nana, Aneeta and the other actors.

CII: How did you overcome the barriers between you and the kids?

M.N: We had to overcome them by a slow process. These kids, you have to understand, are really street-wise. They don't trust you a moment if you just want to exploit them. They live on the streets on their own wits every moment of their lives. And so, they are not going to open up and be your best friend tomorrow. It was something that was done really by the spirit that we created in the workshop. Barry's wonderful, egalitarian style made all the difference. I don't know how to describe it, how comfortable, physically even, we made the children. One of the rules we had set was that we never promised them anything we couldn't deliver. We never promised the moon. There began a trust between us and then we expected the same from them. The responsibility became mutual. We stressed a number of things and one of them was discipline. Even though we had a lot of fun, they had to be there at nine a.m. and leave at six p.m. And anybody who was late would be fined. And the remarkable thing was—they didn't have watches—some came from Cuffe Parade walking during the rains, but they were never ever late. They were treated like good human beings which they hadn't probably ever been. Their desire to learn was enormous and very serious. Obviously, one got emotionally involved with the kids and they with you and that was constant. But we didn't give them any illusions that we were going to be their mothers for the rest of their lives. This whole process was not just to train them for the cinema—they trained us as well—but also to hope that we could communicate to them their own sense of self-worth and dignity because that would be their permanent asset once we had gone. We would like to leave with them something that would be more permanent than just some cash in the bank.

CII : How did you pay the kids?

M.N.: I'll tell you. We followed a careful method of paying the kids, so that they will get most of their money when they are twenty-one. Most of the money is in fixed deposit and is governed by a trust consisting of a number of people in Bombay. Then they have a savings account, from which they can get an interest. We've organized it with the banks. We met them. They know the situation. Also, the kids got some money in cash just to make them feel good when they finished all this work.

CII: The script was ready before you started the workshop?

M.N.: Yes, the script was in its fourth draft before we started. But the workshop and the details that we gleaned and learnt from the children greatly embellished the script. We did four more drafts. The final film was shot from the eighth draft. Sooni, my scriptwriter, was always there—noting, observing; we would discuss things—details that some kid had said. But the script, you have to understand, is incredibly well-crafted though complicated. It is a film with fifty-four actors. So it cannot be an improvised film. '*Aaj dekhenge ke* mood *me kya aagaya*'—it's not like that. To balance a film in a narrative way of six main characters is a very

complicated thing. So the pieces of the puzzle were pretty much sorted out.

CII: So, did you leave room for any improvisation during the shooting stage?

M.N.: Absolutely. My eyes were always open. I come from documentary where you use what happens in front of you at that moment. If you don't get it, you don't. About the script, the story itself, the shape of the story did not change during the shooting, because it had to be very well organized. Our resources were limited. And we had fifty-two locations to shoot in fifty-two days, which is heroic. I will give you an example. In our research, which took place a couple of months before we wrote the script, we had gone to the *Chiller Room* (Remand Home) and we had seen the children being herded together to say a prayer. Instead of singing it, the children would shout it. It was like a revolt every morning. We wrote this into the script. One of our kids was in the *Chiller Room* for four years, and he came to me and said that when the prayer finished, we say '*Jai Hind*'. That was an amazing detail which I hadn't realized before. So I said, 'Say it, immediately.' It's the irony of the statement. It's really very powerful. Some kids improvised their lines. And some kids were cast entirely because of their personalities. We have a Bihari kid called Sarfu who is absolutely brilliant. He is this kid with a lot of style and he is wild, dark (Koyla is his name in the film) and he does lots of *shairi*s, mostly bad *shairis*. Really bad, that he invents. And of course everybody loves it. We have this scene of celebration on the '*ghoda-gadi*' and I just told Sarfu to do his '*shairi*'. And he said 'No problem *didi*,' and came up with something like '*Meri khushboo teri dadhi mein, mera gulab ka phool teri sadi mein.*' And all the other kids doing '*wah wah*'. That's exactly what Sarfu is. So there was improvisation on that level.

CII: You must have been overwhelmed with such kind of details. It must have been very tempting to include everything making the picture either rosy or too grim. How did you maintain a balance?

M.N.: Well, Sooni is very gifted. Really most of the credit of the screenplay goes to her. We were constantly aware of this problem, not just of making it rosy, which we never intended to do, because it wasn't rosy, or making it too grim, because we really went all out, loving the flamboyance of these children and seeing how they survived in the grim atmosphere. But one of the main problems that we worked with was the fact that there were so many stories in this film. As I said, six major characters, and fifty-four characters in total. So, how to keep the narrative balance, so that the audience is with you at every second. That's a long process, where you are constantly asking yourself the question, 'Do you need this?' because everything in cinema is magnified. I am of the firm opinion that economy and the dictum of 'less is more' is better than endlessly telling the same point again and again. I find that one of the greatest ills of most of the Indian films is that they are flabby—flabbily constructed. It makes it really slow for no benefit. You know, the Japanese director Ozu, who makes films that have a slower pace, but they really have a cumulative power that hits you. Some of Ray's work is like that. But just slowness for its own sake, or pallidness is not my scene. Striving towards this economy was always something that Sooni and I had in mind. Actually, the direction is

like stripping down as opposed to adding. And then, it's further heightened when you are editing.

CII: Where would you then say your film was made—during shooting or editing?

M.N.: Absolutely during shooting. The editing is of course innovative and very important. But it is a fiction film where every choice of the scene or shot is a conscious one. It's not like a documentary where you just go with your camera and shoot things as they are and then you construct the narrative in the editing. In fiction film, you can't edit what you don't have on screen.

CII: Since this is your first feature film, didn't you want to shoot more and then edit?

M.N.: Oh, we didn't have the luxury. We had very limited resources for essentially what turned out to be quite an ambitious production. We had not visualized before, so I didn't know what it meant to shoot in fifty-two locations. I didn't even count the locations while we were writing it. Now, somebody tells me a scene and I say it's 20,000 rupees...

CII: How would you describe your film now, after having seen the audience reaction, etc—the entire experience?

M.N.: What I am especially proud of is that it is a film made with Indian audiences in mind and it does not make any allowance for people outside who need to know about India in a certain way. We do not feel it necessary to subscribe to the practiced notion of having a western protagonist to interpret the reality of India as is the case with many recent films that use India as a back drop. You know the kind of deals that producers and directors make to get a wider audience. I feel that we have made this film in as true and as real a manner that we wanted to make it. And that also, it was made in the face of all odds, essentially without any compromises. I really wanted a typically Indian film—not the formula film—but a film about India as we know it. And I think that has been achieved. And achieved by a group of people who have done it for the first time. A lot of new people have worked in this movie, never having worked in a movie before.

On the other hand, it is a film technically made completely with international standards in mind. And it looks like that. That the film is a big success internationally is for a variety of reasons—the universality of the subject. But it is also a film about India, some of the people who bought it said that they had never seen such wonderful shooting.

CII: What would be your reaction to certain people who say that you have merely depicted the poverty of India?

M.N.: It is notion that is easy to have from the outside. It is a completely cliched response that we in India are very familiar with. Right from Ray, in fact. I think they should see the film before they judge anything. And after seeing the film, I don't think anybody will say that this is a film gratuitously showing the depression and misery in India. On the other hand, they will conclude that it is a film that celebrates the survival of the human being in the face of odds. And, again, it doesn't pretend to make heroes out of the street-kids. It affords you a look at a reality which exists. If we don't look at that reality, it doesn't mean it is going to disappear. Also, many of us in our lives—instead of coping with the disparities of existence here—become blind and numb. I feel that this film refuses to let you become blind and makes you feel strongly.

And I think that should be done again and again. Some films reveal such a terrible life that you feel like you have done your duty just by seeing them. Those kind of films numb you instead of provoking you. *Salaam Bombay*! provokes you.

Our primary test for this film is the audience in India. So I really want the Indian people to see it.

CII: You have always been attracted by Indian subjects. Why?

M.N.: I think that to make films which one believes in is so difficult. To see it from its conceptional idea to its execution is so difficult. I can only do work which I am totally impassioned about. For the past few years, I have been impassioned about India. It's what makes my heart beat faster. And I just follow my heartbeat. Also, the fact is that I feel my roots are very much here. Besides, there are so many stories in India that are just crying out to be made.

CII: What is your next film going to be?

M.N.: I can only say that it is a film based in Uganda and in the American South. It is about an Indian family, expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in the 70s, and who now own a motel in America.

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Shooting in the Streets

Film-maker Mira Nair Talks About Salaam Bombay!

Although it took leaving India for director Mira Nair to find her way to film-making, she has returned home repeatedly to pursue her craft. Following undergraduate work in film and photography at Harvard—where she joined forces with husband/collaborator, Mitch Epstein—she made four documentaries on Indian subject matter. Her film, *India Cabaret*, about striptease artists, was a controversial success in India and abroad, winning the Best Documentary Prizes at the American Film Festival and the Global Village Film Festival.

Nair's current film, *Salaam Bombay!*, is a feature film that reveals the world of Indian street-dwellers through the eyes of a ten-year-old boy. Venturing into waters as yet uncharted in India, Nair disregarded convention to shoot entirely in location with street-kids portraying their own reality. Rich in pathos and humor, *Salaam Bombay*! earned the thirty-one-year-old director the Camera D'Or prize at this year's Cannes Film Festival. Nair currently divides her time between India and a loft in New York City's Bowery. *Salaam Bombay!* is being distributed in the U.S. by Cinecom Entertainment Group. It opened in Los Angeles on 19 October at Landmark's Nuart theatre.

When you set out to make *Salaam Bombay!*, did you have any particular models in mind, say *Pixote*, *The 400 Blows* or *Los Olvidados*?

I was completely aware of these films, but made the choice not to live

with them, not to study them actively. They were not crutches that we used. *Pixote*, especially, gave me the courage to embark on this idea that I had before I saw *Pixote*. But on that level, there are so many films that are really inspirational and are part of my own vocabulary, ranging from the ones by Ozu to Wenders to Fellini to Bunuel. I have a very spotty film education because I only started to look at film ten years ago, in college in the U.S. In India, we just don't have access to any kind of serious film on a daily level.

Even Satyajit Ray?

Yes, ironically enough, I got to know his work in Boston and saw all of it there.

Is there no such thing as an art theatre in India ?

Very little. We have many regional languages and many regional types of cinema. Ray works in one of the regions which is not the mass language, Hindi. He's Bengali and so his films, when they are seen, are seen in that region.

At what point did you decide to use street-kids rather than professional actors?

When Sooni Taraporevala, who is the script writer, and I conceived of this film, we embarked on a two-month documentary-style research process — talking to kids, hanging out with them on the streets, in brothels, railway stations and prisons, the whole gamut. From the beginning, I knew that I had to use kids from the street because it was their particular combination of being children and ageless, the qualities they bring with them, that inspired the film in the first place.

How did you find these kids and what was the process of training them to perform in a feature film ?

We targeted certain areas in the inner-city of Bombay around which the film was located. Two of my assistant directors, both women, talked to kids in these areas. We rented a hall in a church in that same area and talked to kids, in a purposefully vague way, about this concept of a workshop on their lives. Over one hundred children showed up, a fairly broad range of ages and curiosity. We auditioned them down to twenty-four.

On the team with me was the theatre director, Barry John, who's really gifted with children, the actor who played Chillum, Raghubir Yadav, both my assistants and Sooni. Besides training the kids for the camera, the whole process was also so that we ourselves would be trained by the kids. We knew that it would embellish the script. We worked with them for about six weeks—a fairly rigorous program—nine hours a day, six days a week.

Were you paying or feeding them?

Paying and feeding them. But we were not guilty liberals or missionaries. This was a job to do, very serious. They were given some money in hand, this was in addition to food, but most of the money was put in a bank. The kids were taken to the bank and shown how it worked. Everyday they could see their bank account growing and the point was that they would only get their bank account when they finished the workshop six weeks later. I promised every kid would be in the film in the end.

Every kid is in the film—the seventeen who finished. And the workshop was a combination of dance, improvisation and discussion on themes that were important to the children. Finally, in the fourth week, I brought in the videocamera. The whole essence of our work was un-teaching the children about their notion of acting, which was very much influenced by

Hindi cinema. That acting is very loud and artificial, declamatory. It was trying not just to remind or lecture, but to reveal with the camera what was subtlety and what was naturalism. So acting became a bad word, actually. When they screwed up, they said, 'Sorry, I acted.'

As you began to shoot, were there problems integrating your professional actors with your street-kids?

The four major actors are a rare breed in India. None of them are huge stars with huge egos. They come much more from the stage, from the ensemble method of acting. They were quick to respond to the skills of the children and the gifts that the children brought to their roles. Rekha for example, would always be struck by the candour and the honesty of her 'daughter', Manju's, performance. She would say, 'I just feel fake. She disarms me.'

With the other professional actors, the smaller roles, they were often very condescending. 'Are you telling me to emote with a street-kid? He can't even read.' But often they would be really amazed. Not only did the children have an incredibly quick grasp of elements like continuity and angles, but also they were so real.

So it was the professional actors, rather than the kids, who required repeated takes?

A funny scene I just thought about, the wedding scene... It was four o'clock in the morning with 200 extras, our one big set. With this professional fat kid, we go through eleven takes. Our kids—they call me 'Tough Sister' — they say, 'Look, Tough Sister, have we ever given you more than three takes? And look at the rich kid, eleven takes.' They were so pissed off at him and so proud that they had never given me this trouble.

This is your first feature film. Did you have any difficulty in making the transition from documentaries?

I had never been to a movie-set before this film. I didn't know how to do it. I didn't study. I didn't do continuity and all these things. However, I am very interested in editing, for instance, and Barry Brown, who edited my last film, taught me a lot about structure.

The whole process of making fiction is completely reversed from that of making a documentary; everything is consciously pre-chosen. The film had to be edited in my mind before it was shot, or as it was being shot. That was an enormous challenge and an enormous pressure. Have we got it all? Of course, I worked closely with Sandi Sissel, the cinematographer, a woman from Los Angeles. She taught me about shot breakdowns.

And the other absolute basic rule—and there were no real rules—was following my instinct in terms of the actors. I never directed actors before, but my whole sensibility is going for something that is more untheatrical than theatrical. As soon as something looks or feels fake to me—whether I can put my finger on it or not—reject that and ask for it again. My assistant director told me that by the end of the school, she had seen me be a whore, a ten-year-old boy, a sandwich-seller, a drug-addict... You do whatever you have to for that result, even an imitation of me, which often it was.

Had your writing partner, Sooni, ever done this kind of piece before?

She had never written anything before, some short stories occasionally. She's a photographer, but she's a native of Bombay. We met twelve years ago and we are very good friends. We share a kind of world view. And she has this gift which both she and I discovered while we were

writing, of really telling it from a child's point of view. She also has a gift with dialogue and with character.

Do you have any response to people who might claim that this film is too slick or polished?

It's ironic, but I don't think they know what India looks and smells and feels like. We never tried to clean it up. Our dictum was 'Less is More,' and we were constantly distilling it so as not to distract from the main story. It doesn't mean prettifying, but making certain conscious choices, never to do with cleanliness. Even if I wanted to sanitize, I couldn't have done it. The commuter station. . . I mean, you can't control these things. You can barely get your actors in there, do your shot and split. That was how we operated.

Shooting in the streets, did you have any problems dealing with the people around you?

All the time. Every three hours. We had an average, depending on the shot, of 500 to a few thousand people behind the camera to control. We had no rules on how to deal with it but there were certain things we learned. One was that nobody ever sat on their arse. Actor, light-boy, go-fer, whatever you are, you have to control the crowd.

The second was just appealing to the crowd, very honestly saying, 'This is our work. Help us, so the whole thing won't be wasted.' And the third thing, which was very important, not just for the look of the film but also to gain the solidarity of the crowd, was to cast the crowd in the film. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. Sometimes we had knives pulled out and production managers taken to the cops.

Were there ways in which the Indian bureaucracy held you up?

Yes, but we used to constantly shuffle schedules. It was constantly Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D. Very often we moved from two to three locations in one day. We did this with three vans and as many taxis as we could get hold of.

In retrospect, might you have preferred to work with a few stage-sets?

No there are far too many rewards to shooting on location. The reality is so rich. What's the point?

In the credits, I noticed a few empathetic lines: 'No guts, no glory, fifty-two days, fifty-two locations, What problem? No problem'. Was this your crew cheer?

It was our motto and the fact. We did indeed have fifty-two locations and a fifty-two-day shooting schedule. The 'no problem' bit is the typical Indian attitude.

You've mentioned that this is not a typical Indian movie, neither a song and dance extravaganza, nor an adventure film. Will it be seen in India?

Yes, it opens in most of the Indian territories around Christmas. If it does well, the others will pick it up. I'm going back to assist with publicity. I want to do some real grass-roots marketing, put the kids on the trains, the radio, that sort of thing.

How did you put together the financing of the film? Was it an arduous process?

Yes. Money was the most difficult aspect. We got our first financial commitment from Channel 4 in England. They agreed to put up forty-nine per cent of our $960,000 budget, but only if we could put the rest of the financing together. We knew it would come together somehow, and we had to start, so we began the actor's workshop. Fortunately, Channel 4 believed in us and released $10,000 UK ($16,800 US) at this point.

We had many different budgets we presented, and eventually a French company, Cadrage S.A., organized some French funding and the National Film Development Corporation of India pitched in, too. We also got help from the Pinewood and Rockefeller Foundations in the U.S. Finally, we raised our full budget, but that was after shooting had already commenced.

Did your screening at Cannes and the Camera D'Or prize help you get distributors interested?

Definitely, although we already had interest from companies that had read the script. We secured sixteen territories after Cannes.

Did you use a producer's representative to help you make your distribution deals?

No. We did it ourselves. It's fun to be the object of a bidding war.

Can you tell us anything about how you structured these deals?

We tried to balance the up front money with a distributor's willingness to give the film marketing support. Of course, you try to maximize the up front money. As we all know, it will take a long time to see any share of the receipts.

You are married to an American, went to college in the U.S. and live half the time in New York City. Do you consider yourself an Indian, American or international film-maker?

I'm very proud to be Indian, but I don't think in labels. I just think of myself as a film-maker.

Like *Salaam Bombay!*, your earlier documentaries focus on Indian subject matter. Do you plan to continue your film-making in this vein?

Not always, no, but in fact, my next film does look at the problems of Indian expatriates.

Do you have any plans for an English language production?

Yes, the film I'm currently working on takes place in Africa and the American South.

How did you come to film-making and what or who influenced your vision?

I acted in theatre in my Indian boarding school days, but it was not really until I came to the States that I discovered film-making. I studied documentary with Alfred Guzzetti at Harvard. He was quite inspirational. And I saw lots of serious films in Boston, as well as in my work as a projectionist at the University.

In addition to the film-makers I mentioned before, the people who really influenced me were the 'experimental', ensemble theater directors — Peter Brook, Grotowski, Joseph Chaikin. Also my work in photography. I am interested in the inexplicability of daily life. What I love about working in the fictional mode is its plasticity.

Do you expect you will continue to produce work that can be classified in the 'independent' mode?

Again, I don't like labels, but what 'independent' means to me is a certain kind of energy, the willingness to take risks, rely on stamina, trust instinct.

KATIE KLAPPER

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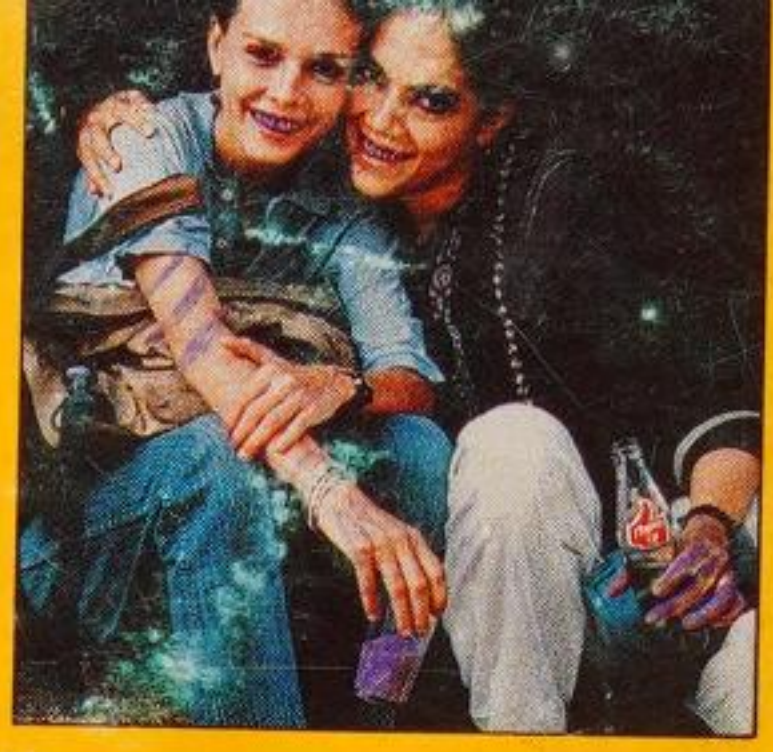
MADHUSHALA

Harivansh Rai Bachchan

When *Madhushala* (The House of Wine) was first published in 1935, Harivansh Rai Bachchan found himself famous overnight. Since then the original Hindi version of the poem has gone into fifty-four editions and it has been translated into English, Marathi, Bengali and Malayalam. The poem has been set to music and choreographed and performed by celebrated Indian dancers.

The poem shows traces of the Persian Sufi style and is patterned, to some extent, on the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam. Bachchan, who has translated the *Rubaiyat* into Hindi, acknowledges the Persian influence in his work and indeed it is this aspect of his poetry that sets it apart from the work of the major Hindi poets of our time.

The range of 135 verses of *Madhushala* is wide: **Wine** and the **Wine-house** as the basic metaphors in the poem symbolize the fullness and intoxication of life as well as its pain and frustration. Love, Beauty, Pain, Sorrow, **Death**, all of these and more are woven into the rich texture of the poem... *Madhushala*, in brief, is a celebration of Life no less.



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The front cover shows a still from Salaam Bombay! (photo: Sooni Taraporevala)
Backcover (top): Sooni Taraporevala & Mira Nair (photo: Mitch Epstein)
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